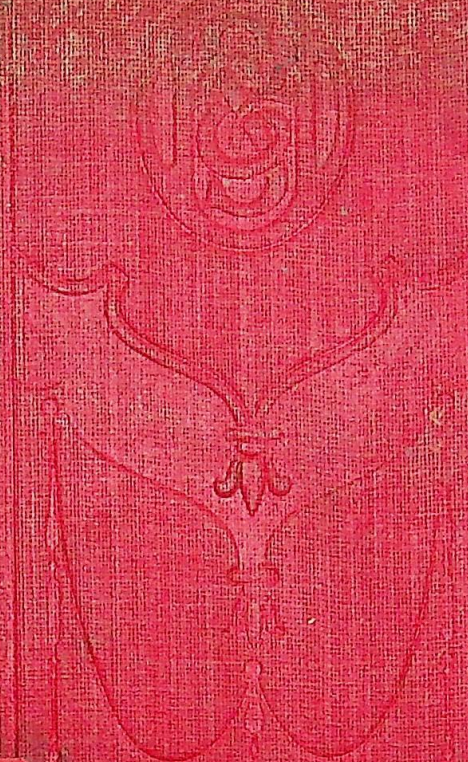




गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार

पुस्तकालय



विषय संख्या ^{IN} 823

पुस्तक संख्या 6155 54547

आगत पञ्जिका संख्या ~~54,447~~

पुस्तक पर सर्व प्रकार की निशानियां
लगाना वर्जित है। कृपया १५ दिन से अधिक
समय तक पुस्तक अपने पास न रखें।

श्री इन्द्र विद्यावाचस्पति

सूतपूर्व उपकुलपति द्वारा पुस्तकालय गुरुकुल कांगड़ी
विश्वविद्यालय को दो हजार पुस्तकें सप्रेम भेंट

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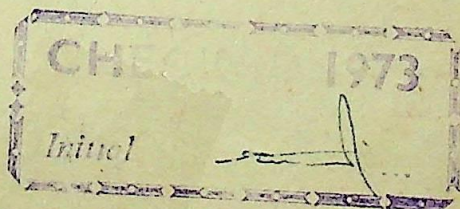


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THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

इन्द्र विद्यावाचस्पति
चन्द्रलोक, जवाहर नगर
दिल्ली द्वारा
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी, देहरादून को
भेद





“‘Ganpat’ was the sobriquet the sepoy
bestowed on the Captain when, as a very call
second lieutenant, he had been posted to
Indian infantry regiment. He was long and th
and it would have been difficult to conceive a
one more unlike the conventional presentment
of the jovial, pot-bellied, elephant-headed dei
of good fortune known to India at large :
‘Ganesh’ and to the Mahrattas as ‘Ganpat’
But it was the nearest his men’s tongues coul
get to his real name, and so it stuck.”

—“Landgrabbing,”

Blackwood's Magazine,

The Nagri inscription below the god’s picture is
name; pronounced “Gunput.” He is a kindly soul
even the mouse gets a meal in his shelter.

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

BY
"GANPAT"

इन्द्र विस्वामपति

इन्द्रलोक, जज्ञादर नगर

दिल्ली द्वारा

गुरुकुल कांगड़ी पुस्तकालय को
भेंट

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

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पृष्ठ सं.	
मुद्रण संख्या १०००	

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Printed in Great Britain for Hodder & Stoughton, Limited,
Ltd., Liverpool, London and Prescott.

TO
MR. AND MRS. ALAN PHILLIPS

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THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

CHAPTER I

CHRISTOPHER ROLAND BARRINGTON, "Kit" as his friends called him, was sauntering slowly along Piccadilly one late summer afternoon with the "good all over" feeling which is the natural accompaniment of finding oneself at home once more after a long sojourn abroad. An enforced absence often leads to a greater appreciation of both places and people. Kit's time of absence moreover had been mostly spent in a rather hot station in the north of India, and although the local inhabitants thought London sultry at the moment, to Kit it was cool after the last three Punjab summers where one drips with sweat under an electric fan at midnight and the dawn thermometer reading is but little lower than the mid-day one.

Moreover Piccadilly was alive, very much alive it seemed to Kit as he watched the unceasing stream of motor cars, the endless flow of traffic. Much as he liked the less civilized and sleepy portions of the world it was good once more for a while to look upon his own energetic folk in the mass, to contemplate the large-sized, blue-clad, white-gloved policemen, who perhaps more than anything else stand to the returned wanderer for the very hallmark of Home.

His immediate goal to-day was his club a hundred

yards further along the street. There, doubtless, he would find some kindred spirit or other with whom he could make plans as to the best way of spending the rest of his leave. At the moment he had no particular idea of what to do other than the obviously imperative course of purchasing a car, for he had realized that life without a mechanically propelled vehicle was next to impossible in this modern world. He would have preferred horseflesh, but machinery seemed to be the order of the day and Kit sighed a little for he was not of the mechanically minded.

Then, having for some years been unaccustomed to walking much in crowded thoroughfares, he almost collided with a man about his own age but rather shorter. Kit stood six foot one in his socks. Recognition was mutual, although some not uneventful years had passed since last the two met.

"Good Lord, Jim," said Kit as they shook hands. "What are you doing here? I thought you were back in Canada for keeps."

"Been over this side for the last year and more," replied Jim Harvey as he studied the other's face. The years hadn't altered Kit Barrington to any noticeable degree. There might be a wrinkle or two more about the clear blue eyes in the lean sunburnt face, but there was no sign of grey in the chestnut hair, nor any trace of development of what the army calls a "field officer's figure," though Kit had been a major for some few years now. "You look as fit as a fiddle," continued

Jim. "What are you doing in London anyway?"

"Six months leave," said Kit. "Come along into my club and tell me all about everything. Where's your sister? Is she over here too?"

"Yes. Keeping house for me in Sussex; we've taken a gem of a little place down there, something really old."

Kit ushered him in through the club door and five minutes later in a corner of the smoking room the two men took stock again of each other. The years slipped behind them as they talked of the past, of the forgotten war years when Kit had been a young captain of Indian cavalry and Jim a temporary lieutenant in the Royal Engineers; he was an electrical engineer by trade, and the two had first met in a particularly offensive and unhealthy trench in the Somme area.

It was perhaps the best part of half an hour before they got back to their original theme and Jim explained his reason for not being in his own country, Canada.

"I'm one of the idle rich you see, Kit. My uncle left me a bit two years ago and now I'm free to follow my own bent of research. I'm on to one or two things in the wireless line which may turn out big presently. Then I've got some others which, if not lucrative, are fascinating. Eighteen months ago I thought I'd come over for a while to look around Europe and see what there was to learn here. Of course Jean came too, and we stumbled upon High Oak and nothing would suit

A*

her but that we must take it. I was glad enough as a matter of fact. It's right in the country and quiet and I've fixed up a workshop there. It's reasonably handy to town, which suits me, for I come up often, have to get things made sometimes, and of course, here I can get into touch with the people who work in the same lines. You must come down and stop with us. What are you doing at present?"

"Nothing definite," admitted Kit. "Going to take over a car to-morrow and after that I'm free."

"Then drive me down in the evening," said Jim. "I've got some things to do to-morrow and I was going by train. Generally Jean brings me up but I thought I'd come quietly this time. She's got the heaviest foot on the gas of any woman I've ever known. If it wasn't for that smile of hers she'd have had her licence endorsed all over by now."

Kit tried to picture Jean Harvey as her brother described her, but found it difficult. His recollections were of a small, rather elfin-faced girl, with unruly dark hair and eyes and unlimited self-possession, whom he had seen a few weeks after the armistice. Jim having successfully stopped various odd portions of a shell two days before the Cease Fire blew, his people had come over to England. Kit had been mildly attracted then by the girl and it would be interesting to see her as a woman.

The following evening in the very newest of new cars he picked up Jim Harvey at the latter's hotel and with commendably few gear clashings

took the road for Sussex. Among the luggage in the back seats were two cases which Jim stowed as if they contained priceless china. Normally the Canadian merely threw his baggage into motor cars and trains.

Despite being of an unmechanical turn of mind Kit could handle a car. "You'll get on A1 with Jean" remarked Jim as they took a nasty corner. "A1," he repeated two seconds later as his trained eye estimated the millimetres by which Kit had missed the mudguards of a Rolls and a quivering, perspiring, purple mass of Very Rich Business anathematized their vanishing dust.

Jean Harvey, whose true Christian name was Jeanne after her French Canadian grandmother, greeted them at the gate and Kit mentally gasped. It was hard to connect his memories with this dainty looking person, whose hair was no longer unruly but perfectly dressed, whose small feet and hands were entirely under control. The only familiar feature seemed to be the complete composure with which she greeted him, and the slight something in her voice, the soft Canadian drawl, as she quieted two excited Airedales who were trying to get into the car before the luggage came out.

She obviously did not belong to Sussex, this girl with the black hair, the brown eyes and the roseleaf skin. Nevertheless she seemed to be in her proper setting here with the rose pergola behind her, the quaint ordered flower beds and trimmed hedges about her, and the background of the old world house. Kit suddenly wondered whether he

had not missed something in life and whether perfect happiness did really consist in sharing two or three whitewashed rooms in a mud bungalow with a bull terrier, two retrievers, seven saddles, four guns, three rifles and a miscellany of racquets, polo sticks and the like.

Then his thoughts came back to practical politics as he drove the now empty car round to the garage at the back and squeezed her in alongside the Harveys' Alvis, as neat and as beautifully groomed as its mistress. Ten minutes later he found himself in the low windowed drawing room where Jean dispensed tea with the air of a French marquise holding a salon. Once again Kit tried to connect the past and present and then finally gave the task up as hopeless in the face of this transformation.

During the process of adapting his English palate to the delights of maple syrup Kit made friends with the two Airedales. It seemed easier to make friends with them than with the lady opposite. But it was a link, because Jean adored dogs. As she explained, they had several, in fact she was breeding them, and had a family in the kennels at the far end of the grounds.

"There's a dog show the week after next," she volunteered presently, "and I'm going to sweep the board with that pair."

Thereafter the conversation ran mostly on dogs, and Kit talked of the wonders of his ragged-eared bull terrier and his retrievers now pining in his absence. Into this conversation descended the

outside world in the person of Mr. Mathias, elderly, medium height, rather mousy as to hair and eyes but breathing polite benevolence. Mathias was the wealthiest personage around, a semi-retired business man who still controlled large financial interests. By way of recreation he amused himself at playing squire on the large estate he had bought some few years back. He shook hands formally with Jean and, balancing a microscopic cup of tea above impeccable trouserings, also talked dogs. He himself, it seemed, was not an expert, but he liked animals and he was presenting a cup for the local dog show. He wondered if Miss Harvey could give him any suggestion as to the class for which he should offer it.

His technical knowledge of the canine world was limited to a few ideas on the training of gun dogs, which presently brought him into touch with Kit who also trained them.

They were discussing the question of calls and Mr. Mathias remarked on the danger of scaring birds when calling a dog by whistle.

"Have you tried the supertonic whistle," asked Kit and the visitor looked at him in polite but obvious incomprehension.

"Well, you know the idea that animals and birds hear noises which we can't," explained Kit. "Something to do with different pitches of sound—I'm not a scientist. Anyway a supertonic whistle makes a noise that you and I can't hear and the dog can, so that you can signal to him without disturbing the game."

"Dogs see and hear lots of things that we don't," commented Jean stroking the nearest Airedale's head. "You can't live with them for any length of time without realizing that. Craggsman can tell when the Alvis is coming back long before I can hear it, and he never makes a mistake with any other car. Evidently he catches the note of the engine, because it can be neither sight nor smell. I've known him dash out when Jim's been driving back and the car's been four hundred yards away and completely out of sight."

"*Most* interesting," murmured Mr. Mathias politely with the air of one who, having just learnt to paddle with his toes off the bottom in the shallow end of the bath, finds himself dragged towards the deep end. He saved himself by remembering that Kit was fresh from India where Mathias had made much money in jute. He still travelled a good deal visiting different business centres where he had interests. He hoped this winter to go out to India for three or four months, but this time more for a holiday to see some of the sights with which the tourist is always familiar and the resident has so rarely time to visit. As he talked in tourist fashion of the East and in shrewd manner of the exchange Kit had to admit that he was not offensive about his wealth, and the car into which they presently replaced him was entirely unostentatious although its price to the knowledgeable was obviously four figures and then some.

As the car slid away Jim suddenly became serious and turned to Kit.

“It was queer, your talking about supertonic whistles. It happens to be just the very line I’m engaged on at the moment, only on a deeper basis. Come upstairs to my workshop and I’ll show you something.”

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

CHAPTER II

Kit looked round Jim's workshop with some slight bewilderment for machinery was beyond his mentality and this room seemed one complicated mass of it. All about were various gleaming instruments of brass and nickel with wires leading everywhere while against the further wall was a row of accumulators. Kit recognized these last—they put them on cars and you have to pour in distilled water at intervals or else your lights or your self-starter give up the ghost. His puzzled gaze returned to their familiar shapes as a child rushes to its nurse in a crowd. Presumably the rest of the gadgets also did something equally useful. He watched Harvey crooning over the winking instruments and marvelled.

At intervals Jim talked and Kit endeavoured to force his mind up to the higher plane down to which his friend was struggling to descend to make himself comprehensible. Kit realized keenly that his young nephew aged eleven, whom by the way he ought to go and see, would comprehend all these mysteries without trouble but then Kit was of the obsolescent generation which still deals with prehistoric animals like horses. He lit another cigarette and tried hard to follow the drift of Jim's talk.

“ . . . ultra audible if you like the term,” went on the engineer as he bent over a series of coils which he had taken out of one of the two cases brought from London. “ The same thing really as the infra red or ultra violet rays. You know that both seeing and hearing are a question of vibrations produced in a surrounding medium, light in ether, sound in air. The human eye is sensible to light vibrations whose wave lengths run, roughly speaking, from $\frac{1}{40,000}$ of an inch to $\frac{1}{80,000}$. But the actual figures don’t matter. The point is that light vibrations below the infra red and those above the ultra violet are not visible to the human eye. We know they exist and by various means we can make some of them perceptible. They come into photography and often have to be cut out by yellow screens over the lens or by plate filters so as to get a picture more or less like the one seen by the human eye. The X-rays are invisible normally but we can make them visible on a screen. In the same way sound vibrations between certain pitches or frequencies are audible to the human ear. Those below or above are not.”

“ But are there any ? ” queried Kit in an endeavour to appear intelligent.

“ In all probability, yes. It would be most illogical if there were not, wouldn’t it ? Any form of vibration must begin from rest and presumably can go on upwards to an infinite speed. You have quite a good example in the squeak of a bat. Most people can’t hear it at all but some few can. It’s

probably just above the average range of human hearing. Beyond that again there is room for endless series of sounds if only we could trap them and convert them into something audible as we trap the invisible light rays and make them visible in some other form as happens on the photographic plate or film. Got me?"

"And that's what you're trying to do?" asked Kit. He was beginning to understand somewhat now that Jim was descending from technicalities into common speech and it sounded interesting—

"Yep. I'll get it too before I'm through. As a point of interest it's fascinating. Take the animals. We say they've no speech and yet very often they seem to be able to convey ideas to one another. Perhaps in reality they have some form of speech which we can't hear. If the gadget I've been working at succeeds we may listen to the dogs talking secrets."

There was no smile on Jim's face—he seemed to be entirely in earnest.

"Not only that but if we could learn to trap those sounds and convert them to audible frequency we might be able also to do the reverse process—to tune our own words up and down till they became inaudible to normal ears. Think what that would mean to the people who held the secret. You could use radio telephony all over the world and only the people who had your reconverting instrument would be able to hear you. The value for war would obviously be immense; no codes needed, no laborious encipherings and decipherings.

The value for politics is probably even greater. Prime ministers would be able to speak heart to heart to ambassadors and newspaper owners overseas without let or hindrance! Oil magnates could juggle with the price of petrol without ever being caught in the open."

"And can you do it yet? asked Kit, bending forward to watch Jim as he finished fixing his coils in position.

"Not yet, but I believe I'm getting very near. Only I'm not telling anyone anything until I'm certain. If it comes off it will be a big thing, really big."

As Jim fastened the last terminal in place and straightened up to reach for his pipe, Kit looked at him. There was a confident ring in the Canadian's voice and Kit knew of old that Jim was not a person to indulge in over-estimation of his own work. Now that he had gathered the drift of Harvey's talk there was no gainsaying the fascinating interest that such a discovery might hold.

"What I'm doing," continued the engineer between puffs at his newly lighted pipe, "is to make tests on Jean's kennels. I'm killing two birds with one stone there because I'm also testing out the most portable kind of wireless transmitter that's ever been made. That part is finished and it works to perfection or as near perfection as we're likely to get yet awhile. I've put in the transmitter at the kennels. It's not powerful enough to be picked up by anyone else outside beyond a couple of miles. Even if they did, of course, they'd only hear the

ordinary noises the dogs make and wonder who was transmitting nature records. Presently I'm going to fit on one of these two new ultra tonic microphones and see if we get something else which we can't hear in the ordinary way. We shall be able to test it since there are two receivers, one with and one without my gadget."

He picked up a small instrument as he spoke and bent over it lovingly, pointing out its delicate beauties to Kit who tried to be warmly appreciative as one does when listening to the mechanically minded, the people who understand the inner intricacies of things like magnetos and dynamos, and not merely what most of us grasp and is really all we seek, the practical result. He followed perhaps one tenth of what the Canadian said but even that tenth seemed to him marvellous. Suppose Jim really had found out something that should open a new world to explore!

It was at this point that Jean opened the door and came in, for she was deeply interested in Jim's work. She understood a great deal about it too, being not only intelligent and quick-brained but a lady who in her time had studied a great deal. She could, however, conceal that fact as well as any man could wish.

"The great moment, Jim?" she asked as she seated herself on the window-sill swinging one well-shaped leg over the other. "You won't hear anything much from the kennels though except guzzling noises. I've just been giving dinners." Reaching for the second earphone she slipped it over her

well-shaped little head and there was a gleam in her eyes as she looked across at Kit.

"Poor Major Barrington! Probably thinks we're all mad here," she remarked. "Dog breeding and wireless research and listening for sounds that don't exist."

"His name is Kit," said Jim, as he cleaned the end of a piece of insulated wire before joining it up. "Don't try and make him feel so old."

"Uncle Kit it was last time, wasn't it?" said Barrington, and Jean decided that his eyes were nice when he smiled. Moreover he understood dogs. A weekend seemed rather a short time for him to stay. Her only brother was the best of all possible brothers but . . . but well, lots of things. It would be amusing to have someone else to take out in the Alvis for a change.

Then her practical mind swung back to the matter in hand and pulling the earphones over her ears she said, "Switch her on, old boy."

Jim slid a switch into position and a tense silence descended upon the room for a space. Kit watched Jean's finely pencilled eyebrows contract a little as she listened in and then her daintily curved lips relax into a smile as she murmured:

"That's Glaxo, he's the greediest little pig of the lot. Probably got all his feet in the dish now."

Then there was silence again as the listening continued, while outside the evening light grew faintly golden and the stillness of the summer evening was broken by the soft rustle of breeze sweeping over the great Weald that lay, mass upon

mass of blue shadow, between them and the distant sea.

"Nothing doing yet," said Jim at last, taking off his earphones with a disappointed air, and pondering over the adjustments of the converting mechanism. "I haven't even heard a flea jump."

"My doggums don't have fleas!" snorted Jean indignantly, taking off her phones to balance them across her knee as she smoothed her black hair with an arm that seemed to Kit to be made of pink ivory. It was a very long time since he had sat looking at an attractive girl against an English background. "Here—give me the converter."

She reached across to take it from her brother and with practiced hand ran over the terminals of the connections, slipped to her feet, studied some dials with the air of one who can really read them, turned some tuning keys and went back to her seat.

Once again silence descended and then quite suddenly Jean spoke and there was a new gravity in her voice.

"There is something different now, Jim," said she, and then lifted her hand for silence as he leaped across the room. "There is something new—noises I've never heard before." She got down from the window-sill and went over to the tuning board to play with the controls and a little puzzled crease shadowed itself between her eyebrows.

"Definite noises," she went on, "and regular though terribly faint. But it can't be the dogs—it's more like people talking in a funny language.

What can you hear?" She moved the headphone an instant.

"Your Glaxo complaining. Nothing else."

"He's probably eaten everything and is grouching because there is no more. Little pig," said Jean tenderly with a certain motherly intonation in her voice. "There it is again. Someone talking and don't tell me that it's Mountain Lady reproving her family because I shan't believe you. You've probably got the wires mixed and I'm hearing Sneezikoff or one of that crowd holding forth from Moscow or Leningrad. Here, you listen."

Jim took the instrument and listened with rapt attention. He knew that the other earphones could certainly pick up nothing save commonplace doggy sounds, but whatever one heard with this set must be entirely and solely due to his sound converter. What the noise could be, however, he had no idea. Voices they certainly were, now slightly louder, now softer, but seemingly faint and far off. Impassive quiet voices speaking steadily in some language he had never heard. Then across them cut in from time to time other noises obviously not speech, few in quantity and repeated from time to time, quaint squeakings, and whimperings, and curious little guttural noises. Those indeed might well belong to Mountain Lady's family who were doubtless sprawling round her in somnolent distended happiness.

But this other? He listened again and then quickly passed the phone over to Kit, hitherto a silent spectator.

"Here Kit, you've got a pentecostal reputation. Which of all the languages you know is on the other end of this outfit?" There was an atmosphere of tense excitement in the room now. Jean, who had picked up the second set of earphones to listen to the stertorous noises of her beloved puppies, had put it down again before this new mystery.

"What on earth are they talking?" queried Jim as he watched Kit's lean face.

"Nothing I've ever heard yet," said Barrington at last with a puzzled air. I know a good many languages and I've heard heaps more and I can generally recognize them. This is something altogether new to me. Of course if it was more distinct one might tell better."

"Hold on a minute," said Jim. "I'll cut out the kennels and hitch on to the big aerial. That'll rule out dogs anyway."

Five minutes later he was listening in once more. Presently he put the earphones down very gravely.

"It works," said he. "Somewhere flying round in the ether are waves which this thing of mine converts to what seems audible speech. They're on no frequency that any ordinary instrument can touch and such sounds as are clear don't seem to be any language that any of us have ever heard. It's coming through the ordinary roof aerial now. Drive me up to town to-morrow morning Kit. I'm going to have two more converters at once, or rather the parts for them. I'm not letting anyone

make the whole gadget complete until I've solved what's behind this ! ”

Jim lay awake most of that night thinking hard. Whatever it might be he had certainly found something ; his converter achieved results even if they were not necessarily those results for which he had designed it. And yet . . . He thought of the odd sounds from the kennels before he had changed the connections. They were the sort of sounds one would expect from dogs even if they were not the sounds ordinarily heard. He must try his converter again on the dogs, perhaps on insects too.

But meantime those strange voices must be brought nearer. Combinations of wires and coils, valves and bridges and gaps danced before his mind, and the faint light of growing dawn was stealing in through his open window before he finally got a clear mental picture of the improved instrument he wanted, turned over and slept.

But it was not Kit who drove him to town. It was Jean who brought the Alvis purring up to the door, Jean with the joy of a summer morning dancing in her clear eyes who installed Kit beside her while Jim and his precious packets arranged themselves in the back seat. She slipped straight up all four gears noiselessly save for the rip of the engine and was out on the main London road with the speedometer climbing steadily. Kit looked at her, cool and composed as the needle quivered steadily upwards, and they came presently to a land where the police did not know her quite so

well, so that for form's sake she dropped to a crawling thirty-five and talked to Kit with occasional remarks over her shoulder to Jim behind.

"She's a great disciple of Nietzsche and Roosevelt," remarked Jim quietly as she slowed—comparatively speaking—in a crowded High street. "'The strenuous and dangerous life.' I shall be able to breathe again soon when we get into thicker traffic."

"Rats!" ejaculated Jean as her neat shoe went firmly home on to the accelerator and the road shot up to meet them once more. But it was an enjoyable drive, as was the return journey with more precious packets in the back. Kit felt he would almost be converted to the mechanical life if he had Jean Harvey to drive him, and he needed no pressing to stay on and help in the wireless research. Jean smiled quietly to herself that evening as she changed for dinner.

Kit stayed on for a whole week, a week that proved absorbing from more reasons than one, even the main one. Jim buried himself in his workshop with diagrams, calculations, and complicated pieces of mechanism, many of them of his own making, for he was skilful with his hands. Kit presently got bitten with the game and began to study radio, a process that involved sitting at the feet of Jean for long periods. Behind her most presentable appearance the girl concealed an amazing fund of knowledge of matters like electricity and physics and other such lore, most of which had been a sealed book to Kit with his natural leaning to the practical outdoor life of horse and dog and gun and rod.

He learnt reasonably quickly. Jean had the faculty of explaining things in terms suitable to mentalities lower than her own. But much as he had become interested in the subject it was the voice more than the words that held him, the speaker more than the voice. Undoubtedly whitewashed rooms in a mud bungalow were not the proper place in which to live—an attractive house nicely appointed with a still more attractive mistress superintending it obviously made up life as it ought to be. Kit was no longer young, not as youth counts now apparently. His nephews and nieces treated him as an

old fossil, a prehistoric survival from a happily remote period of the world's history when something quite unimaginable and utterly unmentionable called "the war" was in progress. The nephews and nieces talked frankly about matters which in Kit's youth had been thought far more unmentionable, free love and "eugenics" and similar questions, discussing them coldly and logically with untroubled minds and calm faces.

No, Kit felt that he was hardly young in that sense and it certainly was not spring, it was summer if early September be summer, and pleasant warm sunshiny summer. But the direction in which his thoughts turned seemed obvious as he looked again at Jean sitting in the deck chair with the bright cushion behind her shoulders, and her gay coloured frock vivid against the background of English green.

"Quite presentable," remarked Jean mentally to herself, as with keen thoughtful eyes through her smoke screen of electrical facts she contemplated the tall spare man sitting before her. Sub-consciously her mind travelled away to India and she decided that she ought to find out something about that country, the type of houses one lived in, what the servants were like, what clothes one needed, and many other similar practical questions. To any sensible woman these were of far more moment than this quite unimportant business of knowledge which had been thrust upon her, and of which she had made a success not because it really amused her but because it was a form of

game that one played when one was young, and she did not like being backward in any game. Her mind in fact turned from the ridiculous to the sublime, from ergs and watts and amperes and rays to frocks and curtains and furniture and table decorations; and then on beyond to all the still more important matters to which these are mere appendages, to home-making in fact.

But the soft voice continued imparting instruction until Jean was quite certain that her listener was not listening and caught him up with a ripple of laughter as she put down the book and pencil.

"Too much at once?" said she laughing.

"Please I'm only a bear with very little brain!" Kit had been reading "The house at Poon Corner" which was much more in his line than this wireless without tears. "I'm not even Christopher Robin!"

But that was just what Jean thought him to be in reality. Christopher Robin three times as large but otherwise unchanged. She had not listened to him for a week, especially talking with her brother over that other side of life that only men seem to have, of adventures with beasts and adventures with men, of casually facing death and laughing at it afterwards, remembering only the funny sides, the humorous moments, and forgetting the real serious part of it; child in fact and likely to remain so, Christopher Robin otherwise Kit. The name needed no whispering into favour, she had liked it from the beginning.

"Tell me about India and about the dogs and

the ponies," said she, of deliberate forethought, and Christopher Robin told her all about his toys, which was altogether far more interesting and important than wave lengths and resistances. She was getting to know them all, "Mica" the golden retriever bitch, "Rags" the tattered-eared bulldog, who had tackled a tiger all on his own and what Rags tackled he held. Master having disposed of the tiger had pulled a crushed, unconscious, red-streaked white body from under the great golden and black carcase and nursed it for a whole week till it could stand up shakily once more and growl weakly.

Then there was Mac the black Australian mare which had carried Master ninety miles in forty-eight hours in the last week in Palestine, and who now earned an honourable pension as a hack, who had perfect mouth and perfect manners and would carry a lady. Kit seemed insistent on this last point. And Dawn Mist and Desert Star, the two Arab ponies, not to mention Warrior and Crusader the big waler chargers. Jean felt she knew them all before he had done talking and it was time to go and drag Jim out of his workshop for lunch in christian fashion. He would have preferred tea and a sandwich but Jean was firm. He had clearly been up most of the last two nights, and Jean had much understanding of puppies and men and all other such lower animals as require feminine supervision.

"I think I've got it," remarked her brother as he helped himself absent-mindedly to salad dressing. "It will be ready this evening and we'll have a

seance and listen to the spooks." This was a reference to Kit's view that they must have tapped a private line between some fashionable medium and the spirits which seem to be much employed to replace old-fashioned religious beliefs in this go-ahead modern world. Angels and devils being obviously too foolish to believe in any more, science, in the person of some of its most brilliant members, was handing out comfort to a bereft world which had no longer anything to swear by, comforting pictures of life beyond the veil. Kit's first week at home had been spent with an aunt who had the craze rather strongly, so that he was up in the subject and his eyes had been opened. He had come home with the foolish narrow belief that supersition is the prerogative of the countries where with a few interludes he had spent the last eighteen years of his life.

"Perhaps they are spooks," suggested Jean, "or perhaps we've got into touch with Mars. What a stunt for the scoop press! Shall I write them an article?"

"No dress allowance if you do," snapped Jim fiercely. "It ain't spooks and I don't think it's Mars, and no one is going to hear about it until I know just what it is and where it comes from." He then proceeded to interlard mouthfuls of salad with long and technical disquisitions on his new Mark VII converter. His audience was evidently not in receptive mood, so finally shaking the crumbs off his napkin as witness against them, he retired to his workshop once more, bidding them take the

Alvis as far away as they possibly could and not worry to return.

They took it a long way, at least a reasonably long way, down leafy Sussex lanes, and Kit sat metaphorically at the feet of wisdom learning important things regarding birds and beasts and nests and gathering valuable notes on dogs. He corroborated them from his own experience and wondered that any female should have such insight into the things that really matter. It was very late when they got back and found Jim with his sturdy person in a deck chair, his feet on another, and a foul pipe bubbling happily as he stared peacefully into space.

"Eureka, or words to that effect," he said, surveying the two dispassionately. "In other words it works and God alone knows what is at the other end. You two will labour after dinner to compensate for slacking all day. I will direct operations." Subconsciously he wondered, not being so complete a scientist as to have lost his sense of sight, whether Jean was not leading Kit on somewhat. She might do much, very much, worse; Jim placed Kit's value high as a proper sort of man. And in his opinion Jean, even if she was his sister, was a really good sort.

He hustled them through dinner and then led them upstairs to his workshop to contemplate the winking glory of the Mark VII converters, already installed and needing only the pushing over of a switch to connect them with the aerial above hitherto more accustomed to the cheerful babble

of 2LO. There was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement about the three of them as they took up the earphones and settled down to listen, a disappointed sigh as the pushing over of the switch produced nothing but silence.

It was half an hour later, when they had almost decided to give up, that Jean suddenly held up her hand. Almost simultaneously Jim who had put down his phones for a minute lifted them to his ears again and heard the same voices that had puzzled him before.

But this time instead of being far away and faint they were sharp and distinct though utterly incomprehensible. It was a quaint, toneless liquid speech, with a certain drone in it that reminded none of the three of any language they had ever heard. Presently it ceased and an instant later another voice took it up, probably from further away for it was not so loud. Then followed what seemed to be a conversation, question and answer it might have been. After a short interval the first voice spoke again, a long passionless monologue but crisp and clear, almost it seemed the voice of a man giving orders. Then once more silence, silence that persisted until at last Jim laid down his phones and looking at the others switched off.

"We've got it quite clear now," said he "And whatever it is it's absolutely inaudible to the phones unless one has on the converter. There's only one explanation, which is that this speech is uttered in tones which normally are outside the

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range of human hearing. What it can be I can't even guess."

"Nor I either," Kit with puzzled brows was playing with the wires of the phone. "I've heard a good many languages in my time but this is altogether new to me. It seems to me we ought to make records of it and then look for some linguist who can help us."

"A phonograph would be useful," remarked Jean as she lit a cigarette. "That would be a much better way of recording it than trying to write it down. We could attach a loudspeaker and fix up a phonograph in front of it."

They went up to town next morning and bought one and incidentally fetched down more of Kit's luggage. High Oak seemed to suit him as a headquarters. That night they made several records and afterwards ran them through again more slowly so as to listen better and pick out individual words which Kit and Jim endeavoured to reduce to phonetic writing.

Jean who herself was no mean linguist assisted, but she shook her neat head more and more as she contemplated the results. They went up to town again and bought books in large quantities, glossaries, and conversation books through which they pored, looking for something familiar. They had by now identified several words which seemed to be repeated frequently and they had individually reduced these to writing on several different occasions. But search as they might they could find nothing like them in their books.

Then one night when the wireless had been silent they sat up late inventing theories.

It's no known European language," said Jim with an air of finality.

"And no Asiatic one, that I've ever heard," added Kit. "I've heard most of the ones that matter. And to imagine some forgotten little savage dialect from the Chin hills or the Malay States being spoken by people sufficiently civilized to use radio-telephony. . . ."

"On a wave length that few people can manage at all. To use that most people would want a set like a first-class broadcasting station. That was a minor improvement of mine." Jim waved his hand towards the neat little installation against the opposite wall.

"Exactly," said Jean. "It's impossible. There's somebody pretty advanced in science sending that out unless. . ."

"Unless what," queried Kit.

"Well, unless—only that's absurd too—unless we've got hold of somebody outside the world altogether. Wireless from another planet. The ether is supposed to fill space and if they were sending out wireless waves there's no reason why we shouldn't pick them up."

"None," agreed Jim. "But let's try and exhaust the more probable possibilities before we venture on to something improbable. It seems to me the first thing is to see whether we can't locate one or other of the sending stations. There are several ways of doing it and it may mean moving about a

bit. But the weather's topping and we've cars and plenty of time. And, which is the most important fact of all, there's my baby receiving set that I was going to patent and put on the market. I guess that's going to be kept quiet a little longer now."

"We might send the records out to Professor Renton anyway on the off chance," proposed Jean.

"He knows whole lots of queer languages, living and dead." And then suddenly an idea struck her. "I wonder—oh, but it couldn't be possible!"

"What couldn't be possible," asked Kit, watching her as she sat up suddenly.

"Well, talking of dead languages made me think of it. Possibly we may be listening to some echo out of space of something spoken years and years ago, thousands, millions of years ago. Light goes on and on into space doesn't it? Some of the stars we still see have really been dead ever so long, and the light from them which reaches us now left them somewhere about the time of Julius Cæsar. If you could only go to them and look back at the earth with a big enough telescope you'd see the Pharaohs building their pyramids or Noah making the ark. Why not sound too! Words spoken ever so long ago still echoing faintly between the worlds!"

"No earthly reason why not, old girl," said Jim. "Only I designed this converter to pick up sound vibrations of a length not generally audible to human ears. It does it, we know that because we've tried it several times on the dogs. Sounds which one would rather expect come out. Here

it hands us out human voices in an unknown speech. I suggest, therefore, that the most likely solution and the one to tackle first, is to assume that what we hear is somewhere in this world, living people talking to each other. The thing is to locate them and find someone who can speak their language. I think it might be worth writing to Renton though."

"Do you mean the archæologist man in Lahore?" asked Kit.

"Yes," answered Jean. "Do you know him?"

"No. I saw him once though. Has a tall, nice-looking daughter, red-haired girl, hasn't he?"

"Di Renton would hardly like to hear her hair called red," laughed Jean. "It's real auburn. She was at school with me, the dearest person. And her father's the same, when you can get him away from his museum and his excavations and his languages. I very nearly went out to stop with Di last year. Then Jim and I found this place and so I didn't."

Kit felt rather thankful that Jean had not gone out to Lahore. He mightn't have met her if she had and certainly not under such ideal circumstances as these.

"We can send him the transliterations," went on Jim, his mind back at the quest. "He's not likely to have a phonograph so it's no good sending out those records. Moreover they might get broken on the way out. And we can tell him something of the way we got them. He's discreet enough and won't talk if we ask him not to.

There's no need to give technical details either, he wouldn't understand them if I did."

For two whole days after that they laboured, transcribing as best they could the sounds given out by the phonograph records running at their slowest, no easy task. But they achieved something that looked as if it might reasonably be a written representation of what they had heard. Jim sent it out to India with a covering letter to Professor Renton. By the same mail also went a very long letter to Diana Renton. Jean had a great deal to talk about and not more than about one-tenth of it touched upon the strange quest.

Then came the dog show and Craggsman and Mountain Lady and her family duly carried off all the honours in their respective classes including Mr. Mathias' cup. Kit thought the cup was handsome and Mathias a well meaning person, though he was a prosy bore when he tried to pose as a dog fancier. But then perhaps Kit had the soldier's bias against the financier, especially when the soldier has knocked about the East for a while.

So September ran on and the long evenings began to draw in and Kit found that High Oak was even more attractive than it had been earlier. Of the attractions of its mistress he had no doubt at all.

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

CHAPTER IV

CRAGSMAN sat up and sniffed the air after a comfortable sleep in the back seat of the Alvis. The car was drawn up stationary by the side of a pleasant Yorkshire lane leading down to a quiet stretch of the Wharfe. He pondered for a while on the question of life, more particularly life as it was led by the peculiar two-legged creatures with whom for some abstruse reason his fate was linked.

The said creatures at the moment could be heard twenty yards away splashing in the river and Cragman detested water except for drinking purposes. Mountain Lady, of course, would be along with the rest of them including Missus and the tall man who tickled dogs' ears and smelt altogether attractive.

Then the Airedale pricked up his ears and sat listening as the breeze drifted across to him. By the noises she was making Mountain Lady had evidently found something and was anxious that he should come and join her. He sniffed the air again but there was no scent to be caught. Then he heard Mountain Lady's call, high pitched and insistent, and flinging himself out of the car went galloping down the lane. As he went the sound was replaced by a far lower note, a hunting call, and Cragman stretched himself out as a big dog should do.

But it was only this last sound which came to the ears of the three humans who, having bathed in luxury, lay sunning themselves on the grass consuming tobacco until they felt inclined to dress. The earlier calls had been unheeded by their duller ears.

"Lady's scented something," remarked Jean sitting up and propping herself on one very shapely elbow. "She's calling Cragman. Probably a rabbit."

"He must have come about 120 miles an hour if he came to that call," said Jim as the dog broke into view, checked a second and then doubled along the trail Lady had taken. "She must have told him long before that. What inefficient things our ears are! I must set to work and design some reasonable size converters that one can use for every-day wear, like one does spectacles. I believe Lady was pulling his leg after all. Look at her laughing."

Mountain Lady appeared again, her tongue out and her red and black flanks panting. Behind her the crashing of brushwood indicated the later arrival of Cragman. Mountain Lady turned like a flash, took him in the shoulder neatly before he could turn to face her, rolled him on his back, bit him twice, and then dashed for sanctuary to Jean's feet, her tail going like a semaphore flag.

"The weaker sex," commented Jim. "A picture of English life. Come here old man and avoid women like I do." He held out his hand to Cragman.

"You're wise," riposted Jean, stroking Lady's adoring head. "You'd come off like Cragman. Silly old thing!" She snapped her dainty fingers at the dog, and he crouched wagging his tail and slid up towards her, springing sideways just in time as Lady with a snake-like twist flung herself at his neck. Then a real rabbit appeared and the two of them shot off in fruitless pursuit.

"I wonder if they really can talk," meditated Jean aloud as she watched them digging frantically in the riddled bank into which the rabbit had vanished—stopping at intervals to grin round with sand, smeared muzzles and then feverishly setting to work again. "From the way they hunt together they simply must be able to make themselves understood! Well, fair sirs, I must dress and thereafter we will lunch." She picked herself up and disappeared beyond the dogs into a leafy copse of hazel whose leaves were already showing the red and gold of dying summer.

The two men shed their bathing gear and dressed leisurely, thinking of beer and cold ham and the various pleasant things which Jean always packed into the lunch basket.

A little later the three of them were settled round a snowy cloth; Jean liked things nice, as she expressed it, even when picnicking. Kit pondered as to which he preferred, the short skirted, dainty woman in the shady hat or her recent incarnation of Undine—a green-clad sylph with ivory limbs who could give him five yards in fifty in smooth water and dive like an arrow. Then Jean held up an honest

English penny with malice in her eyes and he had to concoct the speedy lie.

"Wondering what the result of all Jim's calculations last night were," he said unblushingly, and Jean who had been watching him smiled to herself.

"We're getting it all right," said Jim. "I haven't finished them yet, but I will by this evening and then we'll check again. It's not Mars, so you needn't start thinking out how to get there." He referred of course to the mysterious voices. His hearers understood that well enough, they were all hot on the quest now; its solution seemed to be the one thing that mattered in working hours. Outside those, however, both Jean and Kit hovered, perhaps only half consciously, on the most fascinating quest of all, the exploration of Someone else—someone who might perhaps be that other half of oneself which, men and women alike, we are nearly all of us conscious of lacking.

"It's much nearer than Mars, though I don't think it's anywhere in Europe." He dropped into technicalities regarding the ways and means of position finding, a scientific line into which he had been thrown in the latter part of the war. He discoursed learnedly on sound ranging and kindred subjects, touched lightly upon directional wireless, ricocheted off into higher realms, and Jean put in apposite remarks with a mind that was far more deeply concerned with the proper kind of curtains to make houses in India truly homelike. Kit with half closed eyes watched the smoke of his pipe

slide upwards and drew pictures in the curls and drifts, pictures which had nothing whatever to do with the subject of wireless.

They had been on the road for nearly three weeks, moving partly as the spirit swayed them, partly as Jim dictated whenever he emerged from his haze of slide rule calculations. Night by night, in stray hotels and lodgings in delightful old world inns, they had sat up with Jim's microscopic receiving set. Some nights were blanks, but more often they sat spellbound listening to those strange whisperings that came in an unknown language from somewhere far away. At times the mystery of the whole thing touched them closely, for they were sensitive to such things, even practically minded Jim Harvey. They were listening to something inaudible to every other known station in England, perhaps in the world. And yet how much more was there perhaps still hidden from them. Jim talked on that theme sometimes, he could talk vividly when he liked, and Jean felt then as if unseen hands touched her, unknown beings crowded about her in the room where she sat cross-legged on Jim's bed with the earphones on, listening to the unmeaning words.

That evening on their way back they dropped into the old church, and in the silence of a late summer evening looked at old world tombs of crusading knights. It had been Kit's idea to visit this particular village—his mother's people had come from near by and these were men of his own blood who lay there under their own effigies,

mailed and sword-girt, their crossed feet on dogs not remotely unlike Cragman and Mountain Lady though longer in jaw and slimmer in barrel.

The type had not changed much down the centuries it seemed to Jean, as she gazed first at Kit and then at the still stone faces, the lean, clean cut features under the close-fitting steel caps. Probably never would in the centuries to come. And then her mind slid away to the mystery of it all, the mystery of the torch of life, and she was silent for a long time, silent most of the way back to the hotel, the self-same inn from which Kit's great-grandfather had set out in a mail coach on his first adventurous journey to London.

And she felt then as also Kit felt, the value of continuity, the something quite inexpressible which steals over one as one returns to the real England, the pot pourri in which one's own roots are set no matter where one's home may be beyond the seven seas.

"Take of English earth as much," quoted Jean to herself and then wondered whether there was any difference between herself and these folk of the past, say for instance the woman whose statue lay in quaint stiff garments alongside that of her husband, Richard Brampton, knight, who had followed his namesake the Lionheart in the fields of Palestine where nearly eight centuries later his descendant Christopher Robin had also ridden at the head of his five hundred turbaned spears. Then she realized the trend of her thoughts and the

tiniest touch of colour came into her face as she turned her mind back to practical politics.

The car pulled up at the doorway and five minutes later in a pleasant, scented, lattice-windowed room, with the scents and sounds of a late summer evening, Jean changed for dinner with a mind that still subconsciously ran on matters quite other than the quest of strange wirelessly revealed sounds.

But after dinner she had to be practical as she assisted Jim to set up the tiny wireless receiving set, a gem in its way, which he had designed and made himself, with a range and a power quite out of keeping with its microscopic size.

They were more fortunate to-night; hardly was the set tuned in than from out of space came the baffling sounds, sharp and clear and distinct, a new voice this time, one with which they were not familiar. They had come to recognize some of the talkers, there was No. 1 who always seemed to be slow and deliberate, there was No. 2 who was rather quick and staccato, No. 3 had a lazy drawl and No. 4 seemed to stumble a little over his words as though he had an impediment in his speech. Besides these there were others who were heard less frequently.

As they listened Jim sat busy with his director and as he switched it this way and that the sound grew fainter or louder. At last he seemed satisfied and left the instrument set while with paper and pencil he made various calculations. Kit that night was in charge of the ordinary phone which was always linked on as well, and which, barring

strange atmospherics, never gave any result on that wave length. Suddenly he sat up sharply listening intently.

A minute later Jean, who had been listening with rather a puzzled face, looked across the room. Kit was speaking.

"Two men talking rather violently and disconnectedly in some other language, might be, in fact I think it is, Arabic. Yes, there it goes, they're quarrelling, near the sending set I imagine, I can catch a word here and there." Then he was silent again, listening intently as he sought to piece together the fragmentary conversation.

"Mine's talking again now." Jean lifted her hand for silence. "He's talking quickly as if he was frightened. There, he's stopped."

"I wonder if it's the same fellow," said Kit putting down his phone with rather a grave expression. "If so, I rather think that perhaps he's stopped for good. The last noise I heard was an unmistakable pistol shot and the sound of something crashing down. Then it shut off."

"Mine's silent now," said Jean. Silent it seemed to be and when after half an hour nothing more happened they ceased listening.

"What do you make of it, Jim?" Kit's face was rather puzzled. There had been something about that Arabic which puzzled him, it fitted to some peg in his memory that at the moment he could not place. There was a ring in the voice of one of the speakers which seemed hauntingly familiar.

"It's more than possible," answered Harvey. "It's the same wave length in both cases and we know of no one else who uses it. It's simultaneous, which might or might not be a coincidence. Jean thought the man who was talking in the ultra audible language was frightened at the end."

"Very frightened, I should say," amplified Jean as she looked over her brother's shoulder at the map of the world which lay before him and on which he had been plotting lines and curves.

"And I hear a pistol shot and instantaneously Jean's man stops talking. Too many points to be coincidence it seems to me." Kit bent over the little table and studied the map too. "Where do you make out this lot was?"

Jim ran his pencil over the map on which were some half a dozen small circles, whose area might have been perhaps a hundred miles each, though some were bigger. They represented vaguely his guesses at the places whence they had intercepted messages. A hundred miles was as near as they could get them. One was in Persia; one somewhere in the north of India, a doubtful one showed in Eastern China, a very doubtful one which they had only picked up once was in Germany. There might have been some error in the calculation about that one except that another that they had listened to three times was pretty definitely in Turkey; and still another in Western Russia. This new one, which had ceased so abruptly, was somewhere in the middle of Iraq.

"A regular net of them," commented Jim. "And you would expect to hear Arabic in this last one, Kit. I didn't tell you where I worked it out to be either. It's guesswork because I've only got one ray for direction, the second cross is most unreliable. I got it from that rather doubtful strength indicator of mine. It might be two or three hundred miles or more either side." He checked some figures again before he went on. "One thing is perfectly clear; the voices are worldly enough and there is a chain of transmitting stations running from Europe out across the East."

"I'm glad we wrote to Professor Renton," said Jean. "We ought to hear from him in about another fortnight."

"I wonder if he'll be able to help us," remarked Kit thoughtfully. His imagination was running away with him rather at the moment and he was trying to visualize what had been the scene at the other end of the wireless transmitter, which, according to Jim, was located somewhere in the Middle East. Two men who spoke Arabic had been quarrelling, and the sequel had been a pistol shot and then silence. From the coincidence of the wave length and the fact that Jean's receiver had then gone silent it seemed extremely likely that the new voice which had been speaking in the strange language normally inaudible to human ears had belonged to one of those two men. A network of several such stations? What could it all mean? People who took that amount of trouble to keep their communications secret were

probably up to something which would be well worth finding out. In his time as an intelligence officer Kit had had to do with not a few organizations of various subversive tendencies. Possibly this was another, possibly more dangerous than any of the others he had met. And at that thought the quest suddenly became ten times more alluring than it had been up to date.

Next day saw them on the way back to High Oak and Jean announced her intention of dining at home that night. The Alvis was in a mood entirely in keeping with that of its mistress, and just after sunset they decanted themselves, the dogs, and their suitcases at the porch, all Sussex golden green before them in the dying light. Jean, despite her mixed Scotch and French blood and three generations of Canada behind her, sniffed at the air feeling that this was home as she watched the dogs run riot. Mountain Lady disappeared in search of her clumsy-pawed family while Cragman made love to Smithers, the man of all work who cleaned the Alvis, looked after the water pump and garden, did various odd jobs, and, Jean had reason to believe, courted the pleasant-faced cook. Smithers spoke to the dog in his slow Sussex drawl and the two of them departed towards the garage.

Jean flattered herself on being much too modern to deserve the stigma of being called romantic. Nevertheless there was something not at all modern calling to her as she stood irresolutely on the porch before going in, something which called to

her as she looked out from the window of her bedroom across the whispering trees. Whatever it was it made her slow in her choice of a dress for the evening, slow and very meditative. It was probably the inexplicable something which hangs about old houses, the sweet scented, altogether intangible influence compounded from the memories and hopes and loves of many past generations of men and women.

Jean contemplated one particular dress, a flowered article which seemed to breathe the atmosphere of the eighteenth century, redolent of powder and patches and all the things that go with romance. Then she shook her very modern looking little head and selected another one. And yet people say that clothes don't matter.

DIANA RENTON took the bundle of English mail letters from the tray which the servant handed her and contemplated it. Sunday was always an important day in the week, for although Diana had been in India some years now she had never lost touch with home. She looked forward to the English mail morning with as much enthusiasm as when she had first come out.

She sorted out the letters for her father. The crabbed handwriting on most of them seemed in keeping with their writers, some of whom Di knew, spectacled professors in university towns who corresponded with her father on matters connected with archæology, ethnology and a score more kindred subjects, most of them Greek to the ordinary person.

Among them was one which seemed in a familiar hand, and after a moment's pondering she recognized Jim Harvey as the writer. An instant later she came upon a letter to herself. It was several weeks since she had heard from Jean and the letter looked bulky and interesting. For that matter all of Jean's letters were interesting.

Then Professor Renton came in to breakfast and Diana busied herself with the coffee. The Professor looked with satisfaction at his daughter

sitting opposite to him. She had made that house in Lahore very different from what it had been for many years after her mother's death, and they had been lonely years for Charles Renton, but there were great compensations now. Diana at the age of nineteen had come out and taken complete charge of the place, turned the house inside out, including Renton's study, changed the rooms from gloomy and dusty vaults into cheerful homelike places, re-taught her father to eat food at proper times in proper fashion instead of, as he had got into the way of doing often, in his study among his books and papers and the miscellaneous bric-à-brac which littered it, broken tiles and potsherds from forgotten cities, old coins and arrowheads, prehistoric flint implements and ancient manuscripts. She had cast an eye over his wardrobe and issued orders, in fact she had dealt with him very faithfully. That had been six years ago, and the professor realized that she had reduced his age at least ten years in consequence.

She had, moreover, insisted on his playing; He must ride with her and fish with her and play tennis—there was plenty of time for all these matters if one was methodical, no matter how much the histories of dead and buried kings and half mythological dynasties might press.

Therefore to-day, within a week of his fifty-seventh birthday, Professor Renton looked barely fifty, his tall wiry figure was attired in a well-cut coat and Jodhpur breeches, his grey hair neatly parted and there was a flower in his buttonhole.

Looking upon him, Diana considered that she had successfully brought him to be a proper kind of father, one whom a girl might take about with her with some credit to herself.

Many other men, of course, wanted to ride and fish with her, climb mountains and shoot in her company. Diana looked upon them all with the equal favour which invariably they found insufficient; rosy-cheeked youths, men fresh from home, tanned soldiers who had spent long years in the East; grey-haired, rising civilians with letters after their names and dazzling futures. They were all very pleasant, and quite a fair percentage of them had brains. Diana, who had more than her share, could always recognize the quality in others. Numbers of them, especially the soldiery, could shoot and ride as well as anyone could wish, and in addition to brains had the far better gift of common sense. Diana considered they added very greatly to the pleasure of life, and with a few exceptions, most of them remained her friends. But not one of them ever succeeded in getting beyond that stage, which was perhaps a little surprising in view of Diana's appearance.

Tall girls with beautiful figures, creamy skins and really auburn hair, none of your common carrots, do not as a rule, particularly in India, go on keeping house for widowed fathers at the age of twenty-five with an air of intending to continue the process indefinitely. When, moreover, one of them happens to be called Diana and has all the qualities of her patron goddess with regard to

skill with horse and rod and gun and the more modern substitutes, such as racquet and hockey stick, men are inclined to seek her greatly. Possibly the gifts Minerva had given her in brain and wits may have frightened them but she never obtruded those qualities, indeed, barring Renton, few men really realized that she possessed them. Her women friends, who were many and staunch, knew more perhaps about that side of her make-up.

"There's a letter for you from Jim Harvey, Daddy," said she, passing him his coffee. "It's a fat one—I wonder what he wants you to work out for him. I thought he did nothing but engineering, but it looks more like the sort of letter old Michineau writes, packed with samples of Assyrian cuneiform." She was slitting open Jean's letter as she spoke.

A minute later she looked up. "Jim's letter ought to be interesting," she commented. "Jean talks about an invention of his which has put them in touch with some unknown language, one which is apparently being spoken by people on an unusual type of wireless. Jim wants you to tell him what it is. They want it kept quiet too," she continued as she turned over the pages written in Jean's firm handwriting.

Then she went on reading for a long time in silence, trying to picture it all, most particularly Major Kit Barrington in whom Jean seemed extremely interested. Di Renton had never met him but when she laid down the letter at last she almost felt as if she had. Jean was always observant of course but she must have been observing

at high speed in this instance. Di smiled a little to herself and then grew thoughtful. Jean was her best friend, and any man who wanted Jean would have to be of the very best if Diana would approve him. She must find out about this Major Barrington. Someone in Lahore would be sure to know him. His regiment was at Ferozepore, and Di remembered now seeing him playing in the polo tournament the winter before—a tall man with a pleasant smile.

“What is it all about, Daddy?” she asked at last. Professor Renton was deep in Jim’s letter which, as Di had guessed, contained several closely written sheets of paper, in addition to the letter itself.

“Most peculiar, my dear.” The professor hurriedly returned to his bacon and eggs, for Diana did not like food to be allowed to get cold while one’s mind ran off into the past. “Most peculiar it seems to me.” He sketched briefly how Jim had got hold of this language and how they had reduced it to writing. “I don’t say I know all the languages in the world, not a tenth of them. But I generally know enough to be able to place an unfamiliar one roughly, say it belongs to such and such a group, or is a dialect of some better known one. This is entirely new.” The blue eyes behind the gold rimmed pince-nez turned back towards the closely written sheets with the intent enthusiasm of the collector who has suddenly happened upon a new specimen, be it bird or beetle or stamp or coin.

"Altogether strange," he murmured, and then asked for news of Jean for whom he had a very soft corner in his heart. Jim and Jean had been good to Di in her schooldays, she had spent a summer holiday with them in Canada upon one occasion when her father had not been able to get home. Twice Harvey's people had come over to England where Jean was at school and taken Di for other holidays.

Thanks to Diana's handling the professor had recovered the interest in his fellow men and women which he had at one time nearly lost when he had sought forgetfulness in work. He could put away his work now and turn the whole of his mind to life, be interested in ordinary everyday things, such as Jean's impressions of an unknown cavalry soldier—not of course that Di told him all of those.

When breakfast was over and Di had departed in the car in the general direction of church, he took Jim's letter to his study and sat down to consider it. The rest of his correspondence lay untouched, most of it could wait a while. For an hour he puzzled over the riddle and nowhere could he find a single clue, there seemed no familiar formation of word ending or beginning, nothing in sound or appearance that helped him. Moreover, if Jim was correct, there was the double mystery, and he had a shrewdly high opinion of Harvey as a careful and methodical student though their lines lay in entirely different directions. What Jim said about his converter and the ultra audible tones would be

cold hard fact and that made a second mystery. He picked up Jim's letter and read it again before he turned once more to the specimens of the language.

Suddenly something struck him, he read the papers through carefully, marking certain portions and then leant back in his chair with the air of one trying to catch up some half forgotten memory of the past. His gaze wandered round the room without really observing anything very much, over the photographs and sketches, the painted silken banners from far off Thibetan monasteries, the carved stone statues and clay figurines, souvenirs of excavations he had conducted in seeking to make the past alive once more to the world. It came to rest at last on a many armed brass image of an old Hindu deity which had no particular history but which just happened to connect with an unresponsive cell in his brain. Renton suddenly realized why there was that haunting sense of familiarity about the writings.

He rose from his chair and searched through one of the many bookshelves about the room and presently came back with a voluminous notebook, through which he pored. At last he found what he was seeking, a short page of writing in his own neat hand. Scribbled opposite to it were many notes and queries. He compared it with the writings Jim had sent him, in particular with those portions he had marked. For another half hour he studied the two side by side, pencilling notes here and there, underlining words, three of

them heavily, for similar forms recurred in both instances.

There was distinct resemblance between the two, to his trained eye the likeness could not be due to mere chance—in one instance two identical words occurred together in each example. Undoubtedly Jim had got hold of something interesting, very interesting.

But of the meaning of it the professor had no idea. The example in the notebook had come to his attention three years before, given him by Bob Kennedy of the police. He had not been able to connect it with any language he knew and as the man who had used it was dead before the paper came to Renton there had been no chance of further research. This would interest Bob Kennedy considerably and also Maxwell the doctor, who was keen on dialects. Maxwell was away on leave and would not be back for several days yet, but Kennedy was in Lahore.

Renton turned to the telephone beside him and rang up a number. Presently he heard the policeman's voice at the other end which was luck, for most Sundays Kennedy was out shooting or fishing, and as this was October, with shooting just beginning, Renton had hardly expected him to be in.

"Morning Bob," said Renton. "I've got hold of rather an interesting little language problem sent out to me from home. I should very much like to talk to you about it—it seems to me to connect with something we talked about once before. What are you doing to-night?"

"Nothing," answered Kennedy. "I ought to have been out after partridge only I had trouble with the car yesterday and had to put it into dock."

"Well, come up to supper to-night. I'll send the car down for you. Diana got back this week from Kashmir, had the time of her life fishing up there after I came down. There's no one else."

"Delighted," said Kennedy's voice on a very different tone from that in which he had begun, "Kennedy this end. Who's speaking?" Kennedy, whose chief recreation was shooting and who worked about fourteen hours out of the twenty-four, six days a week, looked forward to his Sundays, and when, as he phrased it, his trusted car had "died on him" the day before, he felt he had a serious quarrel with fate. But an evening at the Rentons with Di presiding made up for much. Kennedy the silent had worshipped at that shrine for some time now.

The professor turned back from the telephone to his notebook and the letter, studied them anew, made some more pencil notes, and finally put them away. This time, however, he locked them up before turning his attention to the rest of his correspondence. It was a mysterious business and there might be more in it than met the eye. Anyway, until he could find out something it might be wise to keep the papers in a safe place. Perhaps Jim was, as he seemed to think, on the track of something worth following up.

That afternoon as Kennedy was sitting in his house indulging in the rare pleasure of a lazy

afternoon with the lightest of light novels, when his bearer brought him his unattractive bachelor tea the man hovered about and seemed unwilling to go.

"What is it?" asked Kennedy at last, as he watched Faiz Ullah moving round the room in an aimless fashion, pretending to straighten pictures which had always hung awry and which his straightening had made even more crooked.

"Bakshi Ram is in Lahore," answered the man looking round from his quite unnecessary and futile task of readjusting his master's writing table.

Kennedy poured out the distasteful tea and contemplated the ceiling.

"Bakshi Ram? Did you speak to him?" He knew his Indian well enough to realize that there would be a long circumlocution before the real point at issue came up, but his quiet brown eyes gave no indication of what he was thinking. He knew his servant too, a most trustworthy person who had begun life as a soldier and after being invalided for wounds had taken up private service with Kennedy. The stolid Punjabi Mohammedan was a person of shrewd wits and keen eyes and more than once Kennedy had found his observations helpful.

"He was telling me of trouble in his village concerning the calf of the cow of his sister's husband," said Faiz Ullah. "There was a matter of money also, of a debt in connection with his brother's daughter's wedding. Also some talk of land, this new canal land that the Government is opening up."

Kennedy listened to the story of the calf, which sounded as if it came out of a prehistoric French grammar owing to the relationships, masculine and feminine, of its various owners. He felt that somehow the pen of his gardener's uncle ought to come in to complete the picture.

The matter of the debt was even more ordinary. Kennedy knew India pretty thoroughly, knew the social codes and the time-honoured customs whereby most of the peasantry go headlong into debt over their children's weddings, matters in which no legislation of the grandmotherly type for which politicians are always screaming can assist. He did not think on the whole that Bakshi Ram had come to Lahore over either of those matters, though he might possibly have come in the hope of getting on the list of land grants to deserving people. He had a good record as a head constable.

"And what else?" he queried, as Faiz Ullah stopped.

"What else?" echoed Faiz Ullah with an air of abstraction, as one who having disposed of the major matters should seek for minor items of possible interest. "Oh—he mentioned some talk of a certain Saddhu." Kennedy reached a sunburned hand for the cigarette box which Faiz Ullah deftly passed to him. The matter of a Saddhu, a Hindu holy man or *soi disant* holy man, might or might not be of interest. There were some few million of them of all types in the country. One or two

of them interested Kennedy in the course of his lawful occasions.

"A Saddhu?" There was an intonation of questioning in the voice as Kennedy watched the smoke spirals climb lazily upward.

"Yes; one whose nose sometimes twitches after the fashion of a dog if there be danger. The Presence may remember one such."

The Presence remembered swiftly. The matter might need attending to. It was a long time since that particular individual had come within Kennedy's view. Both he and Faiz Ullah remembered the incident keenly.

"Did you tell Bakshi Ram to come here?" he asked.

"He said he would come later on. He was not sure of the matter as yet. Maybe it is the man—maybe it is another. Moreover it was but for an instant and Bakshi Ram was not certain. But that same week there was a strange death in the village of his mother's sister's niece."

"Who was it died?" The word used by Faiz Ullah might mean peaceful death on a bed with all the relatives and friends sitting round as an audience in true Indian fashion. It might, on the other hand, mean the finding of a rather battered corpse with head beaten in by several heavy brass-bound lathis, the strong male bamboos with which the Indian peasant belabours his cattle or his neighbour.

A stranger—a Hindu also it seemed. Bakshi Ram had been visiting that village and the elders

asked his advice in the matter, pondering whether it would be wise to remove the body that night across the river so that it be found elsewhere and the village have no trouble. But Bakshi Ram advised that this matter be reported. It was two days later that he thought he saw the Saddhu in the district.

Kennedy reflected swiftly before he dismissed Faiz Ullah to order his horse for him. Then he made a note for investigation at his office the following morning. That question of the Saddhu had seemed a broken thread—an unsatisfactory murder case two years before. The man had disappeared in the end and there was no direct evidence against him. Nevertheless Kennedy had always felt that there was something inexplicable. But then India is full of inexplicable things of all sorts.

He changed into riding kit and presently took the road along the Mall towards the canal. Lahore was not yet cool after the hot summer, and the tan ride alongside of the canal was a pleasantly fresh place in the evening after the hot afternoon.

DI RENTON sat in the drawing-room waiting for her father and Bob Kennedy to come. She had heard Kennedy drive up while she was still dressing, but when she entered the drawing-room the two men were in her father's study—she could catch the murmur of their voices.

All the windows were open and Di had turned on the electric fans, for the evenings were still warm, although there were signs of the cold weather's approach. She sat idly turning over the pages of one of the newly arrived home illustrated papers, but her thoughts were far away in Sussex with Jean—Jean and Kit Barrington and Jim. That letter had given her much to think about. Not only about Jean but also about Jim; Di had always liked Jim Harvey.

Meantime she was in Lahore and so were many other people, not the least interesting of whom was a slightly-built, rather sallow-faced Deputy-Superintendent of Police, whose friends called him Bob, and whose enemies—he had many in many places—called him by all sorts of unpleasant epithets. Bob Kennedy was a rising man, everyone said that, he had made his mark several times, first as a young assistant on the frontier chasing raiders with a cheery, laughing, scallywag gang of

border police who mostly carried their lives in their hands and feared nothing whatever except the displeasure of Kennedy Sahib. The said Kennedy Sahib, however, feared nothing in the world, not even the irritable displeasure of various academic civilian superiors sent from time to time by a inscrutable providence.

He was moreover really clever, as Di had long ago discovered. Last and by no means least, well, he was Bob Kennedy, best of friends and, which was the trouble, Di was content with him as that but she was not so sure that he was equally satisfied with that status.

She sat thinking for quite a little while, the unread paper upon her lap, and only just managed to conceal the fact that she had been giving way to thought as her father and Kennedy came in from the study.

It was a quiet supper, tastefully served like all meals in Di's house, and Bob Kennedy, as so often before, felt the striking contrast between it and the meals of his bachelor establishment. But most of the time he was busy listening to Di as she talked of the charm of Kashmir, of the birch-fringed valleys and the snowpeaks, of the mountain meadows and the wild flowers, and the fascination of the old caravan roads which she had followed for a space. Then she brought the conversation nearer home, to the doings of mutual acquaintances who had fled from Lahore to the cool air of the more fashionable corners of Kashmir, Gulmarg and Srinagar, where people continued

the same round of dancing and flirting and time killing as so many of them followed in Lahore and elsewhere. Bob Kennedy, who had not been able to take leave this year and had suffered worse hot weather than usual, listened with envy to her descriptions, thought with still greater envy of what it would mean to be able to wander the mountains in suitable company. The suitable company implied to him, of course, someone like the girl sitting on his left at the moment.

It was after supper, when the servants had gone and the men were sitting in pleasant comfort in the drawing-room while Di, who was a witch on the piano, played the music that Kennedy really liked, that presently Professor Renton reverted to the matter of these papers sent by Jim Harvey and which he had mentioned to Bob before supper. Di stopped playing and came over to the sofa by her father to listen.

"One thing I didn't note at the time, Bob, was the way Maxwell got those sentences—you remember you gave them to me some three years ago, saying that Maxwell had noted them down and that the man had died. An accident wasn't it?"

"You couldn't call it that," answered Kennedy, drawing his chair a little closer. "We never found out what it really was except that it baffled Maxwell entirely. There aren't many things that baffle Maxwell as a rule. It happened like this:

"One night one of our constables on point duty just outside the city came across a man

lying in the street quite unconscious. He didn't seem to have been assaulted, had no wounds or injuries, nor did he appear to have been drugged. They eventually took him to the hospital where Maxwell happened to be that night, he'd been operating on an urgent case and was there later than usual. The Indian doctor in charge of the ward could make nothing of the case, and seeing Maxwell in the corridor on his way down asked him to come in and have a look at the man.

"It puzzled Maxwell a lot; according to him there were several rather peculiar features. While he was there the man began to talk half unconsciously. Maxwell is very keen on Indian dialects and knows several of them. Well, he could make nothing at all of this one, nor could any of the hospital people, and there was no doubt that the man was an Indian, he might have been a Hindu of half a dozen different types. As you know, Maxwell has the perfect Pelman memory for languages and he noted down such of the phrases as he could. He had a good opportunity, for the man talked on and off for nearly half an hour, sometimes hardly audible and sometimes more clearly. Nothing the doctors could do, however, had any effect on him and he was steadily getting weaker and weaker. Then he became completely unconscious again and was dead before morning.

"It was that which puzzled Maxwell more than anything, for he had a post mortem afterwards and could find nothing whatever to account for death. The man was perfectly healthy in every

way and had no injuries of any description. From what they noticed while he was alive Maxwell said it seemed just as if some unknown power had simply drained him of all his strength, drained it almost as they watched him. I remember the doctor compared it to the quick exhaustion of a battery if you earthed one of the terminals. He said that was the only simile he could think of that seemed anywhere near the facts.

“No one turned up to claim the body, which brought the matter to my notice, and I had enquiries made but without the slightest effect at first; the man was evidently a stranger in Lahore.

“Then quite by accident I did find out something. Maxwell had had photos taken of the body, I think he was writing an article for some medical paper on the subject. I'd taken one of the prints to keep in the office records in case anyone ever did make enquiries about a missing man. I was in my office one day when an Indian I knew, Purun Singh, came in to see me about some small matter—I forget what. He happened to see that photo lying on my table among some others and stared at it, so I asked him if he recognized the man. He looked at it closely and then said that he did. The dead man was a Hindu merchant whom he had known in the course of business, and who had got into money trouble. Being rather more kind-hearted than many of his kind, old Purun Singh had helped this fellow and the man had been grateful. Purun Singh had not seen him for some months after that; the man had gone back to Multan and

started business there, failed again and disappeared. Purun Singh was quite positive as to his identity.

"Well, I fixed up whatever it was old Purun Singh wanted and he went off, and I thought no more of the business until about a week later I got a report that Purun Singh had been killed. It was a perfectly clear case of murder, too. The old man, who owned a good deal of land round Gujerat way, had gone out to have a look over it. The day he was coming into Lahore again he had told his car to meet him on the main road in the evening about a mile from his house, and he would walk across.

"He hadn't turned up by dark so the driver went back to the house. They all said that Purun Singh had left there two hours before. Eventually they found the old man in the middle of a field. He had been neatly and scientifically stabbed through the heart.

"There was nothing at all to show the motive or the murderer, no weapon, and so far as we could make out, no tracks. It was the hot weather before the rains and the ground was iron hard. I hate unsolved crimes, and I worked a great deal at that one both because it was a point of personal pride, and also because in a way the old man was a friend of mine. But I found nothing at all except that his brother told me that Purun Singh had seemed worried about something for several days, and had said he was coming to see me the moment he got back to Lahore. But about what,

either Purun Singh hadn't explained, or the brother wouldn't tell. The brother was rather a different type, a cringing little man with none of Purun Singh's independence of character.

"I've often wondered if there was any connection between the death of the man in hospital and Purun Singh's murder a fortnight later. There are so many undercurrents in Indian life that it's always terribly difficult to get at the truth."

"I remember most of it now," said the Professor slowly, as he thoughtfully cut the end of a cheroot. "It was a peculiar business altogether. But of one thing I'm quite certain and that is that some of the words Maxwell noted down are extraordinarily like these new ones I've got from home. Of course I can't be sure until I've gone a bit further, but on the face of it it's almost certainly the same language, allowing for the differences you'd get when two or three people are trying to write down an unknown language by sound. But the Harveys had made gramophone records and their results are probably more accurate. I must have a talk with Maxwell about it as soon as he comes back next week."

Bob Kennedy left shortly afterwards, and as he drove home to his bungalow he thought a great deal over this new link, if indeed it was a link. Purun Singh's murder had puzzled him considerably at the time—there was simply nothing to get hold of at all. In such cases as a rule if you worked long enough you could find out something to give you a clue, money, or a woman, or even a

political aspect. But although he had worked all those lines, he had finished with just as little information as he had started. Purun Singh had been murdered and that was all there was to it.

Then the thought of the Saddhu came into his mind and he wondered if there could possibly be any connection between those threads, not that on the face of it there was anything to link the incidents. He went to bed very thoughtfully and was some little time getting to sleep, whereas usually he slept soundly no matter what puzzling work he had on hand. He liked his present work of criminal investigation, but there were times when he longed for the more free and easy life of the Indian border, chasing honest raiders who carried guns and knives in their daily round and slit throats in simple and businesslike fashion.

A week later, Maxwell the doctor returned, and Professor Renton descended upon him with his mysterious sentences. By now the papers were covered with all kinds of pencil notes, word roots from a dozen different languages, traces of combinations of word endings and more recent notes made when, for a whole day the professor had suddenly bethought him that the language might be some form of cipher such as thieves' slang—using an ordinary language with inverted words. But in spite of his labour he had to admit to himself that he was no further than when he began. He was beginning to be annoyed, because although he had a great deal of patience with regard to the amount of meticulous work he would undertake for a

result, when no result was forthcoming it galled him.

He found the doctor in his study opening a parcel of books which had arrived from home during his absence, some medical, others dealing with his hobby of languages.

Maxwell listened as Renton explained his new quest and there was a growing light of interest in his eyes as he sat opposite to the professor, from time to time scanning the papers which Renton had brought. Maxwell recalled well enough the circumstances when he had made those notes, he had thought over them often since.

"What do you make of it all?" asked Renton at last, helping himself from the cheroot case which the doctor offered him.

"Nothing—at present," said Maxwell as he leaned forward with a match. "But like your man at home, I begin to think there is something behind it all—there are too many coincidences about it, and I should like to get at the meaning. You know there are supposed to be lost languages out here and there are all sorts of stray societies and sects and brotherhoods in the east. But when one finds one of them up to date enough to use what appears to be a particularly advanced form of radio telephony, well, it makes one think."

He picked up the papers again and began to compare them, nodding from time to time and interjecting crisp remarks as he noted the resemblances which Renton had already underlined.

"Not a doubt of it, so far as I can see," he

finished at last, and then sat silent again pondering.

Maxwell was a doctor from choice and a notably good doctor at that. But medicine was only one of his many talents. He was a born investigator of anything to do with that peculiarly many-sided animal, man. Like Renton he knew much about ethnology, anthropology, customs and kindred matters. But unlike Renton, whose concern was with hard and fast facts, there was another side of Maxwell's character which delighted in studying the less obvious side of man, in learning about his beliefs, his ideas, his trend of thought. It seemed somehow to him that this quest might touch upon all these things and his interest was suddenly fired.

Twenty years in the East had not scotched the enthusiasm which he had displayed so markedly when first he came out. There was something very boyish in the zest with which he still flung himself into these hobbies of his, and his quick versatile brain began to play with the threads the professor had shown him, fired the more perhaps by Renton's rather opposite attitude of the scientist who wanted indisputable facts. The professor was not imaginative, whereas the doctor had an imagination that had often to be curbed, but which nevertheless frequently served its owner remarkably well. He was off already on a theory and Renton smiled quietly as he listened to him.

"It's a lot to have," said Maxwell as he got up and began to walk up and down the room, with its choice Persian rugs, its pleasing water-colour pictures (Mrs. Maxwell painted with considerable

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skill and taste), the odd pieces of old brass and copper, the well filled bookshelves.

"A lot! A language that no one seems to understand, and a form of radio which apparently only one man outside has succeeded in detecting. Why, with those two things and a brain behind them I'd make the world move a little!" Then he suddenly checked and swung round facing Renton. "Good Lord! think of it, man! I shouldn't be a bit surprised if there isn't something in that idea. The world's full of troubles of all sorts nowadays; there are troubled waters enough to fish in for anyone who's got sufficient wits. If only you had reliable means to pull the strings just as and when you wanted to, what couldn't you do? Communications, secret and sure communications, are rather more than half the battle. Suppose that's what your friend Harvey has tumbled on!"

"Suppose lots of things," said the professor. "I haven't got your imagination, Gerald. It's much more likely to be a ring of merchants trying to rig a corner, than to be a subversive society out to upset empires."

"Not a bad way to upset empires is to monkey with trade," remarked Maxwell, still standing in front of the fireplace bending forward slightly, his hands behind him, his chin at rather an aggressive angle. "Not at all a bad way as a beginning. The world's all tied up in a net of trade and commerce these days. Raise the price of wheat in India and the opposite end of Europe feels the pinch. Monkey with the cotton in Egypt and

half India wants to know what's happening. We're all getting linked more and more in that way and so become the easier to upset. A thousand years ago you could run a war of races in the middle East, and Europe lived in sweet unconsciousness of what was happening until, perhaps after a few centuries, a backwash of landless people swept in and started destroying kingdoms. If anyone really wants to upset humanity he's got far finer chances now than any man ever had before in all history. Now particularly perhaps, when most of the civilized world is panic-stricken—though it would hate to be told so—panic-stricken with the thought of possible war. Take up any book you like, any paper, full of peace talk and what they call anti-militarism. It's all the same thing really—cold feet. Rightly too, in a way, because another really first magnitude war is going to make more mess of the civilized world than Attila and his Huns ever did. But since fear is such a dominant factor it makes the world all the easier for the subversive minded to handle. You can do many things with a frightened mob that you'd never induce the separate individuals who compose it to do."

"We began on dialects, Maxwell," smiled the professor. "Now you've got to wars. You're much too fast for my limited specialized brain."

"Not a bit!" snapped the doctor. "Wars mean revolutions and revolutions bring wars—it's an endless circle. And trade can be twisted to bring discontent, and discontent and want are the subversives' most fertile ground for sowing revolution."

We ought to get to the bottom of this somehow or other."

"And find that we've got a private code and a neater wireless installation than the usual type—the whole thing run by some Armenian Jews who are trying to get rich rather quicker than most of their tribe!"

"Then we might be able to benefit," commented Maxwell. "I've no objection to getting rich as quick as an Armenian Jew. Anyway leave the papers here for me to have a shot at and I'll try if I can do anything. Let's go and see what the wife and Di are doing."

Mrs. Maxwell was in the drawing-room talking to Di, whom she had mothered unobtrusively when the girl had first come out. Molly Maxwell had no children of her own and for the last five years this tall beautiful girl of Renton's had been very much to her indeed.

"New pictures, Molly?" asked the professor. The table before them was covered with water-colour sketches which Mrs. Maxwell had been showing to Diana. For the last half hour however they had been talking of quite other things, more particularly of Kit Barrington, whom Mrs. Maxwell knew and liked, and also of Bob Kennedy for whom Molly Maxwell's heart held a very warm corner.

"One has to do something to ornament the world," laughed the doctor's wife as she held up a picture of snow mountains seen over a cluster of wild red rose—far sunlit snow under a sky of translucent blue, very essence of the Himalayas at

their most beautiful. "Since I can't add to knowledge like you men I try to catch something else. What have you been discussing in there? More inscriptions? or was it pottery this time? Or was Gerald away on one of his theories as to the future of humanity?"

Many years ago the doctor's theories had been rather a thorn in the flesh to his entirely idealistic wife, whose bent of mind was what used to be called high church, extra high church perhaps, with a leaning to the mystical. Twenty years of married life had smoothed that over and she was now able to laugh good temperedly at her husband's theories, all tinged with a crystal clear materialism. She disbelieved one half of what he called his "facts" about human nature, and put a different interpretation on about eighty per cent. of the remainder. The result was a comradeship of the best, greatly treasured on both sides.

"Inscriptions, in a sense, in so far as writing on paper is an inscription." Professor Renton smiled a little at his way of turning it. "Of course, as usual, Gerald shot on miles ahead of the facts, and conjured world disasters and hidden hands out of them, while I in my duller fashion was merely trying to find comparative word forms."

"Perhaps it's that lost language that Gerald's always looking for, the one from which all the other ones come—the one spoken by pithe-what's-its-name—Gerald's mythical ancestor, as he always insists. He used to try and explain it was mine until I struck. Of course looking round the folk

one meets I suppose there *is* a lot to be said for monkey ancestors!" There was a malicious twinkle in Molly Maxwell's keen eyes as she spoke.

"That's exactly what I say," remarked her husband as he busied himself with the whisky decanter at a side table. "Perhaps I say it a little violently sometimes."

Just at that moment the telephone in his study rang insistently, and with a suppressed murmur which might have been any one of several lost languages, Maxwell put down the whisky and returned to his study where they heard him in somewhat peevish conversation. Molly listened as she carried on a brisk running talk with Diana and her father. She hated Gerald's profession for this reason, that one could never count on a quiet evening. As the slight irascibility melted out of his tone she sighed. He was obviously going out.

"I must have the car Molly," he said as he returned. "They want me down at the hospital for an urgent case—an accident. I'll come back as quick as I can."

"Well, don't forget that the Wests are coming to dinner," said his wife. It was quite a useless warning as she knew. Despite Gerald Maxwell's occasionally cynical remarks about his fellow human beings no man was more ready to devote every ounce of his energy and unlimited time to keeping them in a world which, according to his publicly expressed views, would be far better for the removal of many of them.

"Come round to-morrow morning my dear,"

she said as Di and her father rose to go. "We can have another talk about the pictures then."

Pictures, like books, can be a good excuse for conversation, and there were a great many things she wanted to discuss with Diana.

Half an hour later, as the professor was in the middle of changing, his telephone rang and he heard Di speaking in his study.

"Who is it dear?" he asked, poking his head out of his door.

"Dr. Maxwell. He wants you to come down to the hospital to help him. He's got a case there, a Chinaman, and as you know Chinese he told me to ask you to hurry down. The man's dying he says."

"A FEW hours at the outside I'm afraid, sister," said Maxwell as he looked down on the injured man who lay heavily bandaged in the hospital bed. "It's wonderful he didn't die outright, but I think Chinese are less susceptible to shock and pain than Europeans or Indians. I hope Professor Renton will be here soon, he might find out something about the man."

"He spoke a few words in very broken Hindustani when he first came to—since then he has not spoken at all," answered the nurse, rearranging the bandages about the head. As the doctor said, the man ought to be dead; one leg had been taken almost off and there were several other injuries each of them serious enough.

She looked down into the pale yellow face with the shut slanting eyes and hairless chin. The man was middle-aged and rather wrinkled, and was probably a traveller for he still wore his own clothes, whereas had he been settled in India he would have taken to some form of Indian dress. She mentioned that to Maxwell.

"Possibly recently come from somewhere in Central Asia," said he. "Those long boots are not Chinese. I wonder what he was?" Unconsciously he used the past tense—it would be correctly enough used before morning came.

Then they heard footsteps along the stone-flagged corridor beyond the little room at the end of the big surgical ward whence they had brought the dying man, and a medical student, a spectacled Hindu, ushered in Professor Renton.

"He's unconscious again I'm afraid, Charles," said the doctor. "I hope I haven't brought you down here for nothing. He's sinking and may not come round again at all, but we might wait a little longer and see."

It was perhaps half an hour later that the still figure on the bed began to move uneasily and the eyes opened wearily, looking round uncomprehendingly on the three people who watched him. Then he whispered a few words in Chinese, enough to tell Renton clearly that he had no notion of where he was nor of what was happening.

Presently there seemed to be some faint accession of strength and for a moment the doctor thought there was a gleam of hope until he realized that it was but the flickering up of a dying ember, for the pulse told him that his first ideas had been only too correct.

The voice, however, was stronger, and Renton listened carefully. It was useless to question for the dying man did not even seem to hear him, he was busy talking to someone far away, sometimes fluently, sometimes more slowly, and as he spoke Renton bent closer for the drift of the talk was strange. It seemed to the professor that there was fear in the man's tones, fear underlying excuses and pleas for mercy, and by degrees Renton began

to reconstruct a little the thoughts that were passing through the speaker's brain, the impressions which evidently constituted the world he imagined about him—a very different world from this quiet hospital room.

“The money I have paid out as ordered by the Fountain of Power—every gold piece of it flowed into those channels leading to the fields of trouble. The accounts are all in order as has been shown to him appointed to see to such matters among us. For myself nothing has been kept back or diverted. Who then has stirred up this mud against me in the well of truth? I have done all that was laid upon me when I set out. Let those with whom I have dwelt all these many months in the New Dominion bear witness. Let them be called into the presence of Power to support my words.”

The sweat on the wrinkled forehead might have been due to the nearing approach of death—it might, though, be nervousness, and due to the terror which seemed to lie behind the man's hurried words poured out in gasping sentences through twisted colourless lips.

“What have I left undone, that the force of life be withdrawn from me by the word of power? Masters of Life and Death—swords of judgment, see, I am guiltless.” The voice died away into silence as a shuddering spasm shook the bandaged figure and the nurse bent over trying to ease him, fearful that the bandages might slip.

In the silence that followed Renton whispered his hurried translation to the doctor and the two

of them stared at the man on the bed. It was surely the strangest of talk to listen to, this pleading for life as it seemed to be. Then again the words began, slower now and more laboured. Whomsoever it was that the dying man addressed, they must be in his estimation supernatural beings of infinite power, as a savage might address demigods or devils—strange words from Chinese lips. But still stranger if he were talking to men, for he seemed to credit them with power far beyond that of any human being.

He spoke as though with a word they could make him die where he lay ; again he talked of the draining of life, though never of simple comprehensible killing. Then suddenly :

“Powers that can see into the minds of men, from whom neither far things nor near things lie hidden in light or in darkness, Speakers in Silence look into my mind and see that I tell the truth, that I, Fook Shin, am guiltless of aught. Let not the punishment of those who fail in their promises fall upon this innocent one.”

Then, and that was the strangest moment of a strange hour, the man dropped from Chinese into some other speech and Renton bent closer still to catch the half whispered words. As he did so he beckoned swiftly to Maxwell, drawing notebook and pencil from his pocket, and the doctor imitated him. The professor scribbled steadily for perhaps ten minutes, a word here, a phrase there, all unintelligible, and opposite to him Maxwell was doing the same with an air of tense concentration.

The voice strengthened again a little, a hoarse whisper now once more in the speaker's own tongue :

"To stand before death this night ! And if I fail then will the avengers be loosed and death be rendered terrible beyond all thought. To stand before death to-night. . . . It is thus the order from those who command—whom the servants obey whether they will or not. . . . " The weakening voice faded away once more into unintelligible murmurs and then to silence, and the heavy breathing pointed to unconsciousness again, this time more complete. Only once a faint whisper was distinguishable : "Now ! oh Speakers in Silence ? I obey . . . I obey ! "

Then suddenly came death. In ten minutes it was over, and Renton and Maxwell rising quietly passed out together into the corridor, going in silence down the stairs to the waiting car.

"Come back with me to-night," said the professor as the car turned out of the hospital. "We must go into it now, straight off. This cannot be mere coincidence."

So, abandoning his guests—Molly Maxwell was accustomed to entertaining in his absence—she never counted seriously on him, he was so often being called out at night—the doctor went back with Renton to the bungalow where Di, with one eye on the clock, sat waiting for a much overdue dinner.

She stayed with them for a long time, for the dinner received but little attention as the two men

discussed the scribbled notes they had made, comparing their spellings, pouncing triumphantly on places where the similarity seemed undoubted, arguing over other points where there were discrepancies in the words they had written down.

Di took a hand at last and bent her auburn head over the notes, speaking as fluently and technically as either of them. She had not lived with her father these last five years without absorbing a good deal of his knowledge, at least of the practical side of it. When she had a mind to, she could talk like the professor himself on the derivations of word forms.

"Considering you were both of you writing down a language you don't know, under very difficult circumstances—a dying man talking in a broken whisper—I don't see what there is to argue over. It's clear enough. And those underlined words are certain proof. It is the same, identically."

Of that there was no doubt whatever when a little later in Renton's study they compared to-night's records with those sent out by the Harveys, identical too with those other few sentences taken down in somewhat similar circumstances by Maxwell himself three years before.

From three different sources now the unknown language had obtruded itself upon their notice, and in this last case there was still more added mystery to fathom.

"'To stand before death,'" mused the doctor aloud. "That is precisely what the poor devil

seemed to do according to the station people who saw the accident—if it was an accident. The Bombay mail was just running in and this man appeared to step from the platform straight in front of the engine. One of the station staff—a ticket inspector—was standing almost next to him and saw it all clearly. I spoke to him on the 'phone before you came and he was quite sure of his facts. He said it was as though someone suddenly called to the man. He'd been looking at him because of his rather unusual clothes and the bag he was carrying, which they've kept at the station in police custody. We ought to find out what was in it by the way. And it all seems to tally exactly with his own words later."

"Then 'Speakers in Silence'," said Renton. "That, too, fits in in a way, because according to Harvey, when this language comes over the telephone wire it is in a pitch which would be inaudible to the ordinary ear. It's a most extraordinary business."

"Why don't you ring up Bob and ask him to see what he can find out for us," suggested Diana. "There might be something in the man's luggage—you said he had a bag with him."

"I'll ask Bob to come up here now if he's doing nothing," said her father, moving across to the telephone.

"And when you've done put me through to the hospital," added Maxwell. "There's another point I'd like to clear up."

Bob Kennedy was free it seemed and would come

up at once. A minute later the doctor got through to the hospital, and Di listened to the incomprehensible one-sided talk until Maxwell rang off again.

“‘The New Dominion’,” remarked Renton apropos of nothing. “He used that phrase which is the Chinese name for Chinese Turkestan. You said you thought he was from Central Asia, Gerald. I should think that remark clinched it.”

Just then Bob Kennedy appeared at the door, grateful for an excuse to get away from his files for an hour to the vicinity of Di Renton. She could probably be induced presently to play him some of those movements which he loved to hear—and in listening to her music he would escape from the thought of his rather harassing work.

They gave him the outline of the story, and from the look that came into his eyes Di could see that he too was deeply intrigued, more particularly at the references to “those who obey” and to the gold which was to have been poured into “the channels leading to the fields of trouble.”

“Well, and what about your Armenian Jews getting up a corner in oil or whatever they deal in?” commented Maxwell to the professor. “This bit of the jigsaw does not fit into that solution, I think. You’ll have to drop the idea. There’s something much deeper.”

“So far as one can guess anything it’s some form of secret society,” put in Di, passing the cigarette box to Kennedy, and studying the new light in his eyes which sometimes seemed so sleepy. He

made her think of a hunting leopard to-night with that gleam under his dark lashes.

"Probably, Di—almost certainly," said the policeman as he bent forward to light the cigarette at the match she had struck for him. "And all this talk which we've been told of points to a man who somehow or other thinks he is being tried by those above him for something he has or has not done according to orders. I wonder . . . ?"

"'The punishment of those who fail in their promise'," quoted Renton. "Those were the words he used once. Yes, that would fit in too on Di's supposition."

"Seeking to clear out via India," remarked Kennedy. "Probably down the Central Asian trade route through Kashmir. I wonder if all the gold really went into the channels leading to the fields of trouble. It often doesn't, and that's the saving of decent folk."

Just then the telephone bell rang and a minute later Maxwell was at the 'phone. At the end of five minutes he hung up the receiver and turned.

"Apparently it did not," he remarked quietly to Kennedy. "They have just told me from the hospital that the man's coat contained a considerable quantity of gold sewn under the lining. The damage done to it in the accident had ripped the lining and so let out some of the pieces."

"I expected that," said Kennedy, "the story is common. I think I will get hold of that bag of his from the railway police to-morrow! There's not much more to be got by theorizing now until

we get some more data to go on. I'd rather hear Di on the piano."

For the next hour Kennedy listened to Di's magical fingers rendering Chopin and some of the Russians. He sat with half closed eyes, one rather slim sunburnt hand beating time softly on the arm of his chair, his eyes half shut behind the smoke of his cheroot. He found music stimulating to thought, and his thoughts were busy with many things just then. But always under the main current was the thought of the girl in the simple but attractive evening frock who was playing.

Next day he was in touch with the railway police, and in company with the superintendent went through the bundle and bag belonging to the dead Chinaman. It was in reality no business of Kennedy's, just an ordinary accident, and his visit to the railway police headquarters was doubtless also quite accidental. But they knew him there and made no remark when he explained what he wanted.

The Eurasian superintendent had the articles brought in and opened them up, and as Kennedy looked at the crumpled contents, the clothes and the felt rugs being unfolded, he recognized that Maxwell's remarks about Central Asia were correct enough. Then from below the clothes the superintendent extracted a leather bag, a rough-cured goatskin tied at the throat with string, the kind of bag that pilgrims and others on the caravan roads use for salt or flour.

He opened it and a few pieces of rock salt

slid out and then other bundles in dirty yellow paper.

"More food?" queried the superintendent, and then struck by the heaviness of them unwrapped one. Out on the table with a clink of metal rolled a handful of gold, Russian ten rouble pieces, English sovereigns, gold coins of Afghanistan and Bokhara.

There were a dozen such packets, and taken with those already found in the dead man's clothes made up a handsome sum.

"One never knows with natives," remarked the superintendent. "He didn't look as if he'd have all that gold about him."

"Probably a pilgrim going to Mecca," suggested Kennedy, knowing full well that the man was certainly not that. "They have to carry a good deal with them. Home and out it's a two years' journey from Turkestan, which is probably where this fellow came from. Anything else?"

There was no more money, and no papers, but in the other portion of the woven saddlebag was a small wooden box containing what looked like a telephone receiver of peculiar shape.

"I wonder where he stole that from," said Kennedy picking it up and looking at it. "It's extraordinary how a native will hang on to things. Probably doesn't even know what it is. Well let me know if anyone comes to claim his effects, but they're not to be handed over until you're quite sure they've a claim. Ring up Doctor Maxwell if they do—he was interested in the case. If

they're Chinese, Professor Renton will be able to interpret."

A little later he was back in his office thinking hard. There was probably some connection between that telephone receiver and the messages Harvey had been getting. It was not in the least likely that anyone would claim those things—if they did it would be useful and give him a point to start from. Presently he would get hold of that receiver and look into the matter.

He waited a week and no one had come forward, so under some pretext he obtained the receiver and took it up to a man he knew, an electrical engineer.

"A queer type of instrument," remarked the other after he had examined it. "I don't quite understand its purpose. It's extraordinarily complicated too. Where did you get it?"

Kennedy had an altogether convincing story about another friend of his who had recently gone home and left some boxes with Kennedy asking him to get rid of the junk—oddments of items collected during the war which he didn't want sent home—they were not worth their carriage.

"Possibly some sort of sound-ranging instrument," remarked the engineer. "There were a lot of funny things like that in use—the Austrians in particular made some complicated gadgets. It's probably not worth keeping."

"Certainly not worth sending home," answered Kennedy, deftly switching the conversation to another subject.

Nevertheless it did travel home, and by the next mail, addressed to Jim Harvey.

From the engineer Kennedy had betaken himself to the Rentons and talked a long time with the professor enunciating some of the theories on which his fertile brain was running.

"We ought to get that man Harvey to come out here for a while, I think," he said. "If he's really keen it's just possible that the receipt of that instrument may bring him. I know a little about those things—this is quite out of the ordinary." He smiled as he remembered the lies he had told to the superintendent and the engineer. "My assistant, young Smith, is going home on leave to-morrow and I'll get him to take it—I don't want it lost in the post or mislaid in the customs."

Di was enthusiasm itself at the idea of Jean coming out for a few months. There were spare rooms enough in Renton's big bungalow and who could fill them better than Jean and Jim Harvey. And then suddenly she wondered. Did she really want Jim Harvey to come to Lahore just now? A year ago she would have jumped at the idea, but that was before she had realized how much there was in Bob Kennedy that attracted her. For once she felt undecided and as a general rule Diana was a decided person, quite sure of her own mind. She listened rather distraitly as her father and Kennedy talked.

"Obviously part of this mysterious show is out here. Apart from Harvey's location finding experiments, we've had these two cases of men talking

your unknown language here in Lahore. The second man was only passing through—we found out that he'd come in from Pindi by the down train the night before—he was obviously not intending to stop here. But the other case was a Punjabi, who belonged to the country. Even if there are ramifications over half the world, as Harvey seems to think, there's a definite point to begin here and he might as well start this end."

"I'll write to him to-day," declared Renton with enthusiasm. "That'll catch the mail to-morrow. I'll tell him about the telephone receiver too, and give you his address at home so that Smith can get in touch with him the moment he arrives."

"Have you got any further with the language yet," asked Bob.

"No. The papers are down with Maxwell at the moment. We can neither of us make anything of it. Maxwell had some ideas but they didn't work out. We're just as much in the dark as ever."

"I expect you'll find a clue presently," said Kennedy hopefully as he rose to go.

As he said good-bye to Diana, who came out to the porch to see him into his car, he was aware for the first time of a certain shyness about her as though she were not quite certain of herself, and there was a trifle of confusion in the way she replied to his proposal that they should meet at the club that night for the band—it was a classical concert evening and the string band of the British regiment was good beyond the ordinary. Moreover the programme included two items which were favourites

of both of them, things which Diana played often.

Kennedy drove home rather puzzled about Diana—he had quick wits and quick intuitions. Diana was always so clear cut and simple to read. To-day it seemed as if she had suddenly become different and he wondered why. And with that sense of wonder he began to think more deeply, wondering whether possibly Di herself was finding that the friendship with which she had been so contented up to date was not really enough. If so . . . Kennedy had always been ambitious, but if Di wanted him he would become twice as ambitious, do even better work that he had ever done before. Love took him in that way.

Meantime Di was writing a long letter to Jean in which she talked for nearly a page of what had happened in Lahore. In the many succeeding pages she talked of other things, sometimes of Kit Barrington, sometimes of Jim. And whenever her pen wrote that name Diana paused a little thinking and picturing the past. Once—of course she was then only a girl fresh from school with the school girl tendency to hero worship—once Jim had seemed to fill the whole firmament. But of course she was older now and so was Jim, who then had been Jean's brother still surrounded by some trace of the halo which in those far off days enveloped the man home from the wars.

She was herself again to all outward seeming that evening when she met Bob Kennedy at the club—he had asked the Maxwells to tea there as well, and a young married couple of his own service

He was somewhat conventional in his ways even in his hospitality.

They listened to the band for an hour and talked serious music in between other conversation. But later on when the full band had been replaced by a small jazz orchestra and dancing began, Molly Maxwell, watching Kennedy and Di taking the floor, became thoughtful and her remarks to the young man whose very young wife was solemnly dancing with the doctor were not always as crisply swift to the point as most of Molly's sayings usually were.

Molly, like all women of her age, was sentimental, she had all the natural woman's interest in match-making, whether or not she had anything to do with it herself. Her hands were guiltless in this case. But she liked them both and she was sure that it was not merely music that accounted for their friendship. There was a lot more to it than that. And as she was very fond of them both naturally she watched closely.

She talked to her husband about it later and he laughed at her.

"You're old fashioned my dear—you've got a Jane Austen mind. The modern youth and damsel have outgrown all that sort of thing and don't lose their heads and rush into matrimony merely because they happen to find life more amusing in each other's company than outside it. They've realized that life alone is dull and therefore they tackle it in couples wherein they're very wise. But nineteen times out of twenty they've not the

slightest intention of taking the matter *au grand sérieux*. The youthful male possibly falls in love in the process but he can always fall out again mighty quick and learns wisdom in the process. And as for the flapper, she doesn't even do that—she just enjoys herself until she gets bored with that one and then finds another."

"Diana isn't a flapper, Gerald," retorted Molly indignantly. "Diana is an extremely nice girl, quite the dearest of the young people here or anywhere else for that matter."

"Agreed every time, my dear," answered her husband with a smile. "So much so that I'm going to get the next dance with her and you can console Bob Kennedy. But all the same she is a modern young woman, and although I insist on the unchangeability of human nature as a rule, I admit that it does not apply strictly to the opposite sex. If it did how the devil could you alter your clothes and your figure so often as you do?"

With which thrust the doctor rose swiftly to his feet and headed off an earnest looking, clumsy youth whose whole bearing indicated that he had at last summoned up enough courage to ask Diana for a dance.

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

CHAPTER VIII

KIT BARRINGTON's leave was drawing to a close, and the prospect of renewed exile becoming more and more imminent. That thought is generally unpleasant but particularly so when one has re-found really good friends and the charm of England has settled down upon one, smoothing out the rough places, and bringing forgetfulness of the sandy friction of strenuous years abroad.

His visits to High Oak had become very frequent visits that had a way of extending from week-ends into weeks. After all, was there not this absorbingly interesting quest of Jim's, his continued researches into ultra audible sounds of whose existence there was no longer even question since his converter had by now proved itself to be an instrument of infinite possibilities. If further excuse was needed a little rough shooting went with the old house, and Kit was the keenest of shikaris with either gun or rod.

There was also the still more enthralling search for those far off speakers who from time to time, mostly late at night, would begin sending their unintelligible and inaudible whispers through the ether, all unknowing that they were overheard by ears outside of those for whom they were intended.

But the station which they had located somewhere in Iraq had never spoken again since that night in Yorkshire when Kit had declared that he had heard two voices quarrelling in Arabic, two men whose quarrel had come to an end with the report of a single pistol shot.

"Funny thing that," remarked Jim one evening when Kit was down at High Oak. "We've never picked up that station again. It really does look as if there was something in your theory that the man who was running it was murdered within sound of his instrument."

"Probably by some fellow who had no idea of what the instrument was at all. Possibly some Arab who had a quarrel with the other man perhaps over money or a woman—lost his temper and killed him out of hand, looted whatever there was worth taking, and just went off. You know I'm still puzzled about that voice though—somehow or other it seemed familiar to me, which is stupid really because voices sound very different over a telephone."

"Anyway we've got some of the stations pinned down fairly close, especially that one in Northern India. You know, Kit, I've really got quite a good mind to go out for the winter and see if there is anything to be found. I'd like to see India and Jean revels in travel. We might possibly go to Lahore and see the Rentons."

"That is what I've always wanted to do," declared Jean, looking up from the book she was reading by the fire. "I'd love to see Di again."

By the way, we ought to hear from them soon. I wonder if Professor Renton can send us the translation of those messages."

Kit bit hard on his pipe stem. The one question to which as yet he could find no suitable answer, was how would India and Jean suit each other? Given the answer to that question—a satisfactory answer—well, lots of things. It isn't everyone who likes India, least of all in the case of women, especially perhaps in the Punjab with the long separations inevitable each year owing to the six months hot weather.

Of her essence Jean seemed to belong at home, here in this rather old world setting of an English house in the most English of counties. Would it be possible to transplant her to surroundings so utterly different—to a life entirely other from any she had ever known?

His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of the evening post, and scanning the bundle of letters Jean gave a cry of delight as she snatched up a fat envelope with an Indian stamp and tossed another to Jim addressed in Renton's unmistakable handwriting.

There was a long silence as they read the letters, and then at last Jim sat up excitedly as he outlined to Kit Barrington the various happenings in Lahore which the professor described.

"And that young fellow with the telephone receiver arrives in London by the boat train on Sunday. I think I'm going to meet him there. It'll save time and trouble."

"We can go up together," said Kit, "I know a fellow coming by the same train—a pal of mine who's on his way home from Iraq. He asked me to meet him as soon as he arrived in town. He'll probably be able to point out young Smith."

"Di wants us to come out to Lahore for the winter," announced Jean, looking up from the lengthy letter she had been reading.

"Whether there is anything in this wireless business or not she wants us to come—says she hasn't seen me for hundreds of years, which is just what it seems. She says Lahore is lovely in the winter and lots of things going on and heaps to see. Oh do let's go!"

"Only fifty miles from you, isn't it Kit?" said Jim without as much as looking in Jean's direction.

"With a good motor road," added Kit. "I admire Miss Renton's commonsense. It's the best plan I've heard of for a long time."

"I'm going to think about it most seriously," said Jean. "I think we shall probably go."

"And what about High Oak? And what about Mountain Lady and her family? If you take them out you'll have to put them into quarantine for about six months on the way back." Jim looked at his sister this time. "I hadn't thought of that," said Jean ruefully leaning down to stroke Lady's head as she pricked up her ears at the sound of her name. "Do you think I could leave you all that time, Lady?"

"Bring them both out" suggested Kit. "You may stay longer—most people do when they come

to India. By the time the cold weather's ending you'll just be beginning to discover all the things you really want to see. Kashmir in particular. You won't want to come home. And Jim will be so busy over trying to find his spook stations that he won't either."

"Better first decide whether we are going or not before we discuss what we're going to take with us," commented Jim. From the tone of Jean's voice he knew that the question was long ago settled and he felt that Kit was probably very near the mark in suggesting that it might be much more than a six months' visit.

The following week when the P. and O. special pulled into London, Kit and Jim were waiting on the platform. As the train disgorged its load of exiles, from among the throng Kit, with his advantage of height, singled out another man scarcely shorter than himself. He bore down upon him and the two men greeted each other as though time and space had ceased to exist.

"I've fixed up a room for you at the club," said Kit. "I'm stopping there to-night. But look here, before we go do you by any chance know a policeman called Smith who should be on this train?"

"That's him over there—little fellow with a cherubic face. Amusing child. Why?"

"He's got a parcel he was bringing home for a friend of mine," Kit realized then that he had not introduced Harvey to Carruthers and hurriedly did so. "We thought we might take it off him now and save him the trouble of sending it."

Carruthers collected Smith who incidentally remembered Barrington from having seen him play polo in the Lahore tournaments—Smith was the type of youth that considers a man with a six handicap at polo little less than a god. He was young and full of enthusiasms. He gave Jim the parcel which he had in his suitcase, and in racy language gave him news of the Rentons, more particularly of Diana. Like Kennedy and some few others Smith also burnt incense at that goddess's shrine.

Jim drove the Alvis home—he wanted to examine that parcel as soon as he could. Kit and his friend Carruthers, with a collection of battered suitcases, took a taxi to Piccadilly and presently were swopping yarns about the past in the pleasant, brightly lit club.

From the time that Carruthers had unpacked a suitcase or two until late that night, the talk slid west and the talk slid north, with various diversions east and south, for both were travellers.

Then it settled down to Iraq whence Carruthers had just come and where Kit had passed five interesting years, and they talked of the present problems in that oldest of countries and of the problems of the past, some of which Kit had helped a little in solving and others of which were as troublous as when he left.

"We had a few queer incidents long after the rebellion had completely died down, some of them crop up still for that matter," remarked Carruthers, looking at his wine glass with the air of a connoisseur and feeling mellow and expansive in this

atmosphere so redolent of home and fleshpots well earned after three years of unremitting work among Arabs and Kurds and such like peoples.

"Do you remember old Ibrahim Safi outside Baghdad—rather a nasty bit of work in some ways, though he used to pose as being the most in-offensive and harmless of merchants. You must surely remember him over that bit of trouble in nineteen twenty."

Barrington remembered well enough—the name unyoked a host of incidents which of late had lain forgotten at the back of his brain. Ibrahim Safi—a Baghdadi Jew, pale-faced and rather pink-eyed, with a most untrustworthy mouth and a more than doubtful past. Why the Turks had never hanged him out of hand had puzzled Kit often. Then with it came back other memories of the old Jew, his rather singsong way of talking and one or two characteristic phrases. The long unused Arabic words began to form on Kit's lips as he thought over the past, picturing Ibrahim's warren of a house, his over-painted daughters, his oily manner. Then suddenly something more leaped up in his memory and he leaned across the table, his manner suddenly rather tense. Carruthers sensed a slight touch of excitement in Kit's tone as Barrington replied.

"Lord, yes! Of course I remember the little beast! What happened to him?"

"Nobody quite knows what did happen exactly. He had married a new and pretty wife which may have been the cause. But anyway a month ago

they found old Ibrahim in that place of his outside the city one morning with most of the back of his head blown out. A pistol at about a foot range seemed to be the answer. And funnily enough the same night the house was burnt down. Of course nobody ever knew anything definite though I expect various people made profit out of it. He must have been worth a quarter of a million, all of it shadily got."

Carruthers told another story or two of the late unlamented Ibrahim and then passed on to other personalities in that City of the Caliphs, still as full as ever of intrigue and interest. But all through the evening and still more afterwards when they went to bed Kit's mind ran on that same train of thought. With the name as a peg it was all so obvious. The voice of the first man heard over the wireless in that quarrel had most certainly been that of Ibrahim. Possibly, indeed quite probably, therefore, it had also been Ibrahim's voice to which they had listened earlier, speaking the unknown language only rendered audible to their ears by Jim's converter.

He found it naturally necessary therefore to drive down to High Oak the following afternoon and they received him as a matter of course—for a long time now the spare room had been unconditionally at his disposal.

"Where's Jim?" he asked, as Jean came out at the noise of the car and Cragman and Mountain Lady swarmed up upon him in love. They seemed to have come to the conclusion that he belonged

there, and Kit often wished he did especially at moments such as this when he stood looking at Jean in a more than usually attractive costume. She seemed to Kit to find all seasons becoming whether it were new leafed spring, or golden summer, or russet autumn with the grey evening mists drawing in.

"In the workshop. He only got back about midnight and he hasn't stirred out all day. It's that telephone thing which Professor Renton sent. He's had no lunch to-day."

She led the way in to the firelit drawing-room where tea was still waiting, and Kit with a school-boy appetite devoured large slices of honest English cake as he told her of his conversation with Carruthers, and the two of them discussed whether or not it was yet another link in the chain whose end they had stumbled upon and which perhaps might lead to something really big.

A little later they broke in upon Jim, a broodingly quiet Jim immersed in experiments the focus of which was the quaint-shaped telephone instrument he had received from India the previous day.

"We're well on it now," remarked Jim, as he looked up at their entrance. "This gadget is another form of my own converter. It was damaged and I had to patch it up—only finished it an hour ago. It's a better one than mine too, lighter and more powerful. I suspected it from the beginning. But it's not a receiver, it's a transmitting mouthpiece. Listen here."

He took it over to the far corner of the room and

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connected it to a short lead to the other end of which was an ordinary earphone.

"Pick that up and listen, Jean," said he.

Jean picked it up obediently and listened for a minute or two, watching her brother who was obviously whispering into his instrument.

"Can't hear a word," she remarked at last.

"Exactly—you won't. It's throwing up the pitch of my voice beyond anything your ears can hear. Now slip that converter of mine on to the connections."

Jean attached the converter and clear and distinct in her ear sounded Jim's whisper.

"You see," said he. "It's neat, isn't it? It's the other end of mine in a sense: the people who use it obviously have the receivers too. It alters the pitch of the noise to something inaudible and then you can bring it down again to hearing frequency. I wonder how much some Government would pay for that secret. Jean, old girl, I think we'll go to India by the next boat."

"Not the next boat," put in Kit. "The next but two. We'll all go together."

"I'm going to write to Di now," said Jean as she departed through the door, leaving Kit to repeat his story about Ibrahim Safi.

"There's something well worth finding out in this," commented Jim at the end. "God alone knows what it means but I don't think it's anything ordinary."

For the rest of that evening and all the next morning they talked about India, and when finally

about tea time Jean brought out the Alvis after reminding Jim that they had promised to go up to tea at Mr. Mathias' and give him advice about one of his dogs which was not turning out well, the subject of the conversation was still India.

Mathias was his usual affable self even when endeavouring to conceal his real ignorance of dogs behind book-learned phrases and lore obviously picked up from keepers and then carefully polished to be brought out as his own. But when the conversation slipped to India—Jean's enthusiasm could hardly keep her off it—he was more at home even though his India was the rather superficial one of the Port Town merchant. Still he had occasionally ventured further afield and he expatiated on the glories of the Taj upon a moonlit night in a way that made Jean suspect a strong vein of sentimentality behind his commonplace exterior. If they went he hoped to see them in Lahore—a stay in northern India was to be part of his holiday this year.

It may possibly have been the talk of the Taj and the moon which made Jean thoughtful during the drive home. It was a full moon of autumn and though the evening was cold it was not unpleasantly so—indeed it was attractive, for there was a softness in the air, a slight indistinctness of haze, which added to the mysteries of well known things, the trees, the familiar hedges, the homely corners. Jean felt that somehow there was something faery abroad to-night, that it was a night of

elves and talking bunnies and she thought that Kit was more than ever Christopher Robin. Perhaps it was because they were all going to India together and therefore the coming end of his leave no longer disturbed him.

Jim was sunk in thought—he had had a long talk with Mr. Mathias while Kit and Jean had been exploring his glass houses—he had a fancy for all sorts of exotic flowers about which he was rather more knowledgeable than about dogs. They had talked wireless, and although Mathias was even more ignorant than Kit with regard to the mechanism, he was as enthusiastic as any boy over its possibilities, although naturally somewhat drawn towards its money-making prospects. He rather indicated that in his opinion there might be money in it in the East, and he for one would be ready enough to invest a reasonable amount if a better brain than his would point out some new line.

On their return Jean lingered on the doorstep looking out into the evening light thinking. Then she turned and went upstairs to her room and was slow in dressing, stopping from time to time to look out to where the full moon hung red-gold in the mist as it began to climb upward in the sky to change from gold to silver above the silent dusky trees.

Kit also watched it from his window, watched it again when he came downstairs, and standing in the garden smelt the good smell of English earth and also thought, and then presently became aware of Jean standing by his side, more dainty than ever

in her flowered dress, which somehow had something old-world about it—though he could not have explained what it was. Actually, with due allowance for change of fashion, she had modelled that dress from a picture of her great-grandmother and it was entirely in keeping with High Oak.

“What a moon, and what a night!” said Jean softly.

And then she also became aware of Kit, Christopher Robin who had suddenly grown up in a sort of way but which was only what might have been expected, Christopher Robin who was quoting poetry to her, a thing he had never done before.

The rest of his speech concerned nobody but herself and was entirely personal, and probably the great-grandmother who had designed the original dress smiled at the sight of her great-granddaughter in just the same circumstances as she herself had worn the original. Only the Christopher Robin of her day had a tight long-tailed red coat and a high stock and a crimson sash with tassels of gold. And great-grandmother's hair had been dressed high on her head in a mass of quaint little curls and ringlets. Great-grandmother from the other side probably sighed a little as she sat hand in hand with the owner of the red coat, watching history repeat itself and thinking that these modern fashions were perhaps really much more sensible. If as seemed more than likely—occasion arose, Jean's hair anyway would be much easier to rearrange quickly than hers had been.

Presently a somewhat hungry Jim made noises

from the dining-room, noises that died away unanswered in the empty night air. He made them several times and pondered until he be-thought him of the dogs and sent them out into the shadows, which was really rather mean. However, he had the subsequent decency to stroll out into the night in the opposite direction from that which Mountain Lady had taken, and discreetly ignore a flitting shadow which showed for an instant in the golden glow of the open doorway.

He then felt it was safe to return and sat awaiting the heavy step of male feet on the flagged walk. It might have been the faintest trace of powder on Kit's faultlessly cut dinner jacket, it certainly looked suspiciously like a hair on his white shirt. just about the length of hair that belonged to a neatly shingled head. Kit was looking altogether foolishly other world and trying to whistle to show his complete composure. No, he hadn't noticed Jim calling. He and Jean had been talking about the stars, she was developing a taste for astronomy he thought.

Jim, knowing that she had only come downstairs half an hour before did not seem at all surprised when she appeared on the stairs again a quarter of an hour later with suspiciously bright eyes, and thereafter talked incessantly, pointedly ignoring a rather silent Kit who seemed somewhat to have lost his usual hearty appetite.

"Going to work to-night," asked Jean casually but hopefully towards the end of the meal, and Jim thoughtfully remarked that she had guessed it one

time. He was sorry, but he really had a lot to get through and if they would excuse him. . . .

"Drop in and say good-night, old girl, if I don't come down when you go to bed," said he, and betook himself off to his workshop. Somehow he forgot to suggest that Kit should help him.

It was very late indeed when Jean came up and he noticed an unwonted hesitation in the way she opened the door and smiled to himself. Even shingled hair may cause grave doubts to its owner.

She perched herself upon the corner of his work-table and talked hard for at least ten minutes, in which time she failed to say anything at all. Then there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and Jean slipping to her feet, kissed him hastily and fled.

Kit was less hesitating in his entry, he stepped in brusquely and seated himself on the table Jean had just vacated, and Cragman, who had found the drawing-room a stupid dull place, wagged his tail sleepily and contentedly. He loved his mistress and he had wholeheartedly adopted this large tall man. But just of late the two together when no other human was present were too miserably dull for any self-respecting dog. He hoped they would get it over presently, and come back to earth, and had scratched at the door until Jean had let him out.

Kit ventured a futile remark about the work and then relapsed into a smoke covered silence. Jim watched him with a lurking smile at the corner of his clean shaven mouth.

At last Kit blurted it out with the air of a small boy who has decided to make a clean breast of it.

“’Fraid you’ll have to suffer me as a brother-in-law, Jim,” he remarked, apropos of nothing.

Jim stretched out his hand.

“Have a drink, old man.”

JEAN HARVEY was sorting her early impressions of India some six weeks after her arrival in Lahore as she sat in the Renton's drawing-room waiting for Kit Barrington. He was taking her to the horse show which is generally the opening of the festive season when much of Northern India gathers to spend Christmas in the continuous whirl of dances, polo tournaments, and all the other festivities constituting the Lahore "week."

Jean had come to the conclusion that India in general was altogether amusing, and Lahore in particular a delightful place in the winter. According to Diana its summer was quite impossible, but then there always is a catch somewhere in life.

Jean liked the life and she liked the people whom she met, even if in many ways they were somewhat different from those at home. But then if your year is clean cut in two parts, one of which is purely male and lived in a red hot hell of dust and sandstorms with your womenkind either packed home to England or else planted somewhere in the Himalayas, naturally you are inclined to make the most of the winter when life can be more or less normal.

It was primarily a man's country, she could see that. There was outdoor work and games and

sport and very little else. But so long as you had health—Jean had plenty of it—a few years in India might be extremely pleasant. And with Kit at worst only fifty miles off, and at the moment in Lahore itself, Jean was entirely content. She contemplated the rather new-looking diamond ring on her slim finger and smiled a little. Life was certainly rosy.

Her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of Diana, a most attractive and smart-looking Diana, obviously dressed for a social afternoon. Upon her neat heels came Jim, equally smart and chafing rather at being dragged from the extemporized workshop which he had rigged up in a spare room. But Diana was firm, she required him to squire her this afternoon, to buy programmes, carry her shooting stick, and perform the hundred odd functions suitable and necessary for the mere male in attendance upon a woman.

Under protest, therefore, Jim had donned a wedding garment and an old college tie, and taken up the "white man's burden" as he expressed it, wishing the while that he was an Oriental nabob whose womenkind, suitably secluded in a carefully screened motor, might be sent out in charge of a grey-bearded servant. All the same he felt that Di was certainly a noticeable person and if one was forced to go into society, well, one might do worse than accompany Diana Renton. He had sufficient of the natural male's vanity despite his somewhat misogynist pose, to appreciate being with a beautiful woman and he had realized early that that was

a fair description of the once rather tongue-tied and slightly solemn girl whom he had first met as his sister's school chum.

Mechanical noises without indicated the arrival of Kit's car, and as the three of them came out of the bungalow the greetings of dogs emphasized the fact that there was no room in Kit's back seat. There never was when he came to fetch Jean. As she took her place, Rags of the tattered ears and the pink eyes thrust his wet nose into her hand and Mica the golden retriever clamoured for attention. They had realized by now that this new female creature was of importance in Master's scheme of things.

"Which means that you and I have to take the Buick," said Jim lugubriously to Diana. "You'll drive, of course. What a trial sisters are when they grow up. I have spent many years of effort and uncounted gold, to make that," he indicated Jean's back view of attractive hat and the very latest kind of frock, "into a suitable assistant, and lo and behold all wasted. I am inclined to demand compensation from Kit."

"The selfish masculine view," retorted Di as she let in the clutch. "It will probably be the saving of you in the end now that you have to look after yourself."

"Look after myself!" ejaculated Jim. "What else have I done for over two months and more now. Was I not compelled, in sheer self defence, to adopt a lone grass widow and play that loathsome game, deck tennis, on the voyage out. Unless

I can find a like minded man here, I shall have to do the same in Lahore."

"Shall I find you a grass widow?" asked Di with a smile. "We've got some attractive ones here even if there's no deck tennis."

"Ones with mechanical minds who can be trusted to hitch on the right wires to the right terminals and do dutifully as they're bid?" asked Jim hopefully.

"You'd want a real widow for that—not a grass widow. She'd be awfully dutiful at first and make it up afterwards."

"Not playing, Di," said Jim firmly. "Produce me a man with whom I can swop lies and drinks in peace away from jazz bands and such like things. I suppose we go to the club to-night. Don't suggest me dancing though. I strained my ankle playing footer."

"When?" asked Di concernedly.

"About eleven years ago. It always hurts when a violin starts. It's wonderful what sensitive things ankles are. I saw a specialist about it and he said the only cure was to slip away to the bar directly the music began. I find it works like a charm."

"Well, ankle or no ankle, you've got to stay to-night. I've got two extra women coming."

Jim sighed heavily and relapsed into his cigarette case as Di turned into the long mall leading out to horse show ground. Jim considered his chauffeur and decided mentally that the providence which looks after little children must also exercise

its direct influence on their potential mothers. There seemed nothing to choose between the dangers of driving with Di and with Jean, though he had to admit that Di had a polished judgment about corners and traffic. They arrived at the horse show unscathed and Jim took a deep breath of relief as the car slowed up, and Di, looking delightfully calm and composed, slid her in with an inch to spare between two other cars in the long rank.

He followed his hostess dutifully through the crowd and endorsed her knowledgeable views about the horses and their riders. Despite a mechanical mind he did know something about horses, and Di approved his judgment which coincided with her own. Presently they located Jean and selected the best seats they could for the chief event of the afternoon, the jumping, in which Kit Barrington was performing.

He did two very perfect rounds and thereby secured once again a trophy upon which Jean had set her heart, and the big bay waler nuzzled at his pockets afterwards for sugar and rubbed a silky nose in Jean's little hands seeking for more.

"Rather fun," said Jean as she looked from the horse to the man, or rather to Christopher Robin the boy. "I shall ride you next year, shan't I, old man." The wise bay head with the white star stretched forward again making endearing noises.

"They all seem to love you, little Jean," whispered Kit, and there was something like adoration in his eyes at the thought and Jean laughed again. "Isn't it fun, boy?"

Jim Harvey, overhearing their words, felt lonely for perhaps the first time in his life.

He hadn't much time to think about that, however, because the girls demanded tea and ices with much speed, and he and Kit had to fight for chairs and a table and talk politely to Diana's other friends who materialized in large quantities. The friends made congratulatory remarks to Kit about his horses, while with swift feminine side glances they appraised Jean Harvey, who fully aware of the fact, talked lightly, to all intents quite unconscious that people were taking stock of her.

Upon them presently descended Bob Kennedy with a ticket hanging from the lapel of his coat, very smart to look upon. He always took considerable pains about his appearance. Jim greeted him as a long lost brother—a fellow man was something to welcome in this feminine world, and introduced him to Kit when opportunity offered.

Bob Kennedy studied the big man opposite to him and then suddenly remembered they had met before. The name had been familiar to him from the outset. "I thought so," replied Kit. "Fifteen years ago now though, up at Kohat."

"Yes, my first year in India. You came out with your squadron after old Inzar Gul and his cheery cut-throats when they'd raided Spin Ghar way. Remember we caught them before they could reach the hills and your coves dusted the floor with them."

"Lord, yes ! That was a really bright morning !"

Kit beamed at the fifteen-year-old memory as he thought of that affray in the cold dawn, below the frontier hills after a wearisome night march. Guided by Kennedy and half a dozen of his constables, they had successfully ambushed a raiding party on their way back to the hills with a drove of choice cattle, some prisoners to ransom, and half a dozen women. The cattle and the prisoners had been rescued and the raiders learnt a swift lesson, after which some few were glad enough to get away empty handed and wounded into their hills, and others went south again to jail and rope, and some were buried where they fell.

Jean listened to the swift talk and caught a picture of another side of India, quite a different side from the one usually seen by the globe trotter in the East who meets only the holiday side, the "week" when men gather in from the outer posts and the dull lonely stations, where they exist for months at a time among semi-savage folk whose only idea of law is that of the rifle and knife. Yes, it was certainly a rich land in its own way, and Jean felt that she could love it, all of it, with Kit beside her. There was something in her to which it made appeal, for all that in other circumstances, she could be utterly at home in the heart of the English countryside.

Then she looked from Kit to Bob Kennedy and from Bob to Di and reflected a little. She liked the policeman and she loved Di, and it seemed that the two were extraordinarily good friends. And then of course there was her Jim, who, more

often than not, pretended to be bored with women. How much of it was pose?

However, he had discarded the pose, if pose it were, two nights later when they dined with the Maxwells before a fancy dress dance in aid of local charities. As is the usual habit of the British male, he had of course protested violently at being forced into a costume which was not normal to him. He had several good reasons why he should not go, and needless to say his ankle was extremely painful.

Nevertheless he went, disguised as a comic farmer, which rôle he sustained with some vigour. By the time dinner was well on its way he had warmed to the part and was keeping his neighbours completely and thoroughly entertained. On his left sat a very modern damsel with peachblossom skin and a dress that had evidently been copied from one of Beatrice Grimshaw's heroines, and on his right Diana as a Venetian lady, an altogether attractive version of her usual self.

Beyond her sat Bob Kennedy—Molly Maxwell had seated her guests with some considerable care. Bob Kennedy for reasons best known to himself, had come as a mediæval Italian cavalier, in a gorgeous outfit of red slashed black and gold with long hilted rapier and dagger all complete. It suited his rather sallow colouring and his keen dark eyes and black hair. He made a very suitable pair with Diana, and Molly Maxwell appreciated the fact, being as has been already mentioned, romantic of temperament.

The party was gay, as is usual when people dress up, which is probably the reason why fancy dress affairs are always popular. It is a great thing to be able to get away from oneself for a little while, to be somebody quite different from the self which all of us get to hate from time to time. Diana felt the inspiration of the moment and was a very complete Venetian lady with her fan and her long lashed glances, that lost nothing by comparison with Jean in a similar kit and an even more mischievous mood.

Bob Kennedy, who under his matter of fact efficient exterior also hid a vein of romance, felt that his part required living up to. By the time the women rose Diana was not quite sure whether somehow or other they had not slid back four hundred years into the past.

She was quite certain that they had when an hour later in a packed crush Bob sought her out for one of several dances he had booked earlier in the week. She found it hard to recognize the more usual Bob in the cavalier who danced so gallantly—Bob did most things well. But to-night he was dancing more delightfully than ever before, the band was what all bands ought to be but so seldom are, and the music was the Barcarolle from the *Contes d'Hoffman* which was one of Di's favourites. Bob was humming the air as he danced and Di caught the well known words and wondered once again about many things.

It was at the third encore that Bob suggested they should go up to the gallery to watch the dancers

for a little while and so be sure of a seat, for the place was crowded. It was a good corner both for seeing and for not being seen, altogether suitable to a cavalier and a lady from old time Venice. Bob had meant it to be.

"Quite the most perfect of waltzes," said Bob regardless of his strain on the English language.

"Quite perfect," answered Di. "And the music a dream."

"And a lady more perfect than either," added Bob with a new note in his voice that made Di's heart beat faster, for things seemed to be suddenly coming to a head.

"What made you come in that kit?" she asked hurriedly. "I thought you were going to wear that wandering minstrel one."

"A thing of shreds and patches," quoted Bob. "No; not when Jean said you were coming as this. I wanted to match you, Di, that's what I've wanted to do for ever so long now," Di became aware that he was leaning forward and talking softly. "Couldn't we make the Barcarolle real, Di—just you and I?"

And then Di was quite sure that they had slipped back at least four hundred years because this really was correct Bob Kennedy, only suddenly he had metamorphosed into something quite different, foreign perhaps, but altogether attractive to some part of herself which hitherto she hadn't really known. She knew that because the beautiful lips which Bob saw in the half light were altogether those of a lady of Venice, and for those few

moments Di Renton was someone different, someone he had imagined often but never really seen.

Then as the music stopped and a laughing throng swept up the staircase in search of chairs and cosy corners the twentieth century snatched them back and Diana was Diana Renton again and not at all sure that she wanted to be.

They were silent for a minute—it seemed an age of time before Di spoke.

“Let me think a little Bob—you’ve ever so much—I didn’t know how much until . . . until just now. But I want to be quite quite sure . . . altogether sure.”

“There isn’t anyone else is there?” asked Bob, and there was a tense note in his voice. This meant all the world to him now that he had realized how much Diana was, how deliriously sweet her love could be.

“No . . . it’s not that,” whispered Diana, playing nervously with her fan. “No . . . but. . . .”

At that moment a yokel farmer came round the corner, arm in arm with a lady from Hawaii with flower-wreathed hair. Jim Harvey also was under the influence of the night and his usual rather monosyllabic conversation with the other sex had suffered an access of fluency. He might even have played deck tennis with zest.

“No . . . Bob . . . there’s no one else,” said Diana with half truth. Certainly nobody else . . . somebody else had never asked her to share life as Bob had asked her.

"Then that's all right," answered the nineteenth century Bob, as he played with the rapier hilt from the fourteenth century—it was a toy he could use—he had been a brilliant fencer in his varsity days. "I'll wait, till you're quite sure of yourself."

And then Molly Maxwell appeared with an oriental nobleman in the shape of the doctor, whose ordinary evening dress was embellished with the addition of a fez and a red sash across his shirt front, and the twentieth century came into being once more.

It was a memorable dance undoubtedly, for at least two people, and when in the small hours Di was reconverting herself from mediaeval Venetian fashion to the flimsiness of modern sleeping attire, she studied herself hard in the glass to see which was the real Diana, the one she thought she had known inside out, or this new one who had suddenly come into being at the touch of Bob's lips and his whispered words. She was very slow brushing out her rich auburn hair and thinking over many things. It was all silly too because Bob was the best of friends, and Jim . . . well Jim was just Jim who didn't really care for anything at all except his research work.

Which actually was not quite correct because Jim, who at the other end of the house was sitting on his bed in pyjamas smoking a last cigarette, was thinking hard. His thoughts concerned one Diana Renton and he was wondering whether his ankle had recovered sufficiently from the accident of eleven years before to let him dance. Women

liked a man to dance and so perhaps it would save trouble if one did take up the loathesome game. Jean would doubtless understand—she was sensible enough for a sister. Diana had always been beautiful, but to-night. . . . And he, Jim, had had to masquerade as a yokel farmer, while that damned policeman . . . no, he was a jolly good fellow all the same . . . that damned policeman had been in just the suitable part. Those things again apparently mattered to women . . . Jim ground the butt of his cigarette into the brass ashtray and retired to bed.

The following morning, however, he had come back to the more serious matters of life, to wit his researches. He had fixed up his apparatus and had been proceeding with his position-finding experiments. Unfortunately the Indian station of late had been unaccountably silent, though he had picked up the Russian and German ones beyond any further doubt. Several times he had caught some of the others that he had registered before and was beginning to wonder whether there had been some mistake and whether he was wrong in siting that particular station, No. 3, in this part of the world.

He talked to Kennedy and Maxwell about it and they had urged him to go on—they were both certain that something would be found. The professor was still busy with his language research, but so far he could find nothing to guide him in identifying the unknown tongue.

It was while the policeman was talking with

Maxwell one morning that Barrington came in, and finding Kennedy began to talk of old days on the frontier, from which the talk naturally shifted to Kit's later experiences during the war. From these it passed to the latter period when in his way he had been engaged in somewhat similar work to that which Kennedy now did, allowing for the difference of surroundings.

"It's a fascinating game," remarked Kit. "Watching men and trying to think ahead of them, seeing what they're thinking, reading their motives and always on the lookout for little traits that may guide you. You know it all of course."

Bob nodded—he knew it well enough.

"Of course sometimes one gets had and kicks oneself afterwards for not having seen through the game earlier. I remember once a case in Iraq where I thought I had all the threads in my hand and was going to land a really big fish—it was towards the end of the Arab rising. I'd been watching one man most carefully and I knew that he was the moving spirit in a lot of the trouble. That is, he was the actual agent, for I had an idea that there was someone else behind him though I could never locate No. 1—the really big noise.

"Among my intelligence agents I had a little Armenian who was pretty useful, though sometimes I didn't feel quite sure of him. But in this case I was confident because the man I wanted was an Arab whom I knew had no love for Armenians or Jews.

"I'd got just the last bit of evidence that I wanted

and I arranged to round up the fellow—I knew where he would be. I'd taken a lot of trouble to be sure about that. I sent off a party to arrest him which they duly did—everything worked out neatly according to plan.

“I didn't go out myself on that occasion—there were reasons why I did not want to be out that particular night and when the news was brought to me I was interviewing my little Armenian man. The messenger came in rather excitedly and very cock-a-whoop because they'd got the fellow alive and unhurt which was more than we'd expected—he was rather a desperate character.

“You know the way one notices things unconsciously and then remembers them afterwards. Well I noticed something that night which at the moment didn't strike me until too late. Presently the Armenian went off—I'd given him another job of work, and I sat waiting for the prisoner to be brought in. There were several things I wanted to get out of him that might lead to my laying hold of other fish.

“It seemed to me that the escort were a long time coming, for the place was two mile away, and I got rather impatient. At last I heard men marching in, and a moment later the man in charge came in looking extraordinarily sheepish as he saluted.

I asked him where the prisoner was.

“‘They're bringing him up,’ he answered, and then added ‘we're afraid he's dead.’

“Just then they carried him in and sure enough

he was dead. Naturally I rather lost my temper and asked what they had done to him. The guard swore that they'd done nothing at all except search him carefully in case he had any weapons on him. They'd tied his hands behind him and were certain he'd had no chance to take any poison. Marching back he had fallen down in some sort of a faint. Dead he certainly was and the doctor could make nothing of it. I suppose he got hold of some kind of poison when he realized the game was up. There was nothing to be done about it, of course, except cut one's losses and start again.

"It was next day when the Armenian did not turn up that I began to get a little suspicious. When he hadn't appeared the next day after either, suspicion got stronger, and when finally I lost sight of him altogether I began to realize that he must have been double crossing me. And it was then that I began to remember and connect things which I ought to have noticed before.

"I always thought that the Armenian was rather nervous—a natural enough trait, of course, in an Armenian who's only recently escaped from Turkish rule—the Turk had no illusions about the race. But he had a funny habit when he was scared—I must say it was the only sign he did give, because he could keep his nerve under all right and had been in several very sticky places. When things were not going right he used to start tapping mechanically with his left hand, a peculiar tapping that rather got on one's nerves, always with the second and third fingers only, a single beat with

the third followed by a quick beat of third and second. I don't think he knew he did it.

"Now what I noticed, but only subconsciously, was that when news came in that we had caught our bird that night, the Armenian, who was listening, said nothing. It was only when the messenger emphasized the point that the man was alive and unharmed that the Armenian, who was standing by my table, began to tap it.

"Thinking about it afterwards it all came back and I kicked myself pretty hard for not having connected it. I never got definite proof, but from one or two things I found out afterwards I felt sure that the man I really wanted—the big No. 1—was this fellow who'd actually been apparently working for me."

"I've been had that way, too," said Kennedy sympathetically. "There was a murder case I was pretty interested in, and among the people I had to do with was a Saddhu who had another of those peculiar traits—used to twitch his nostrils just like a dog does when it's suspicious. My own belief is that that was what made the Saddhu do it—suspicion. I had him in my hands once without realizing his importance and let him go. I heard about him the other day again, and I shouldn't be surprised if I meet him again. I'll watch his face pretty carefully this time if I do."

"Those unconscious movements are funny things," commented Maxwell who'd been listening silently. "Some of them I think really are sort of atavisms, relics of animal ancestry if you like,

which is why we're unconscious of them. I don't suppose a panther realizes that it's twitching its tail before it springs. I doubt if a dog knows that it's twitching its nose when it scents danger. And I think that some men still have animal senses. If you're interested in that line you ought to talk to Rupa—he says that he can hear the animals talk—that it's a gift among certain members of his tribe. By the way he handles dogs I half believe he's telling the truth. Talking of that it would be rather interesting if Harvey made some experiments on Rupa with that converter of his and see whether he can hear anything. What are you thinking about, Kennedy?"

The doctor's quick eye had noticed that Kennedy, instead of listening, seemed sunk in a brown study.

The policeman came back to the present with a quick smile.

"Coincidences." He laughed apologetically. "I was just wondering about Kit's man who died so conveniently and that fellow we took to your hospital—the first man who spoke this unknown language. Are there ways of killing that we don't know of—killing by thought for instance. You know Indians say that if a man wants to die he can die—some of them do. I wonder if it could be possible for a man to have the power of killing others in that way, more or less by telepathy. It would be extraordinarily useful."

The doctor looked at him seriously before he answered.

"I'd never thought of such a thing. If it were

... I should think if it were, there would be some form of safeguards. Unrestricted, such power would make the world impossible. But it's an interesting thought, Bob." Then he looked at his watch and rose hurriedly, "I must get home quick. I promised my missus to be at home to-night for dinner. Seeing that I've deserted her three nights running when she's had people in, it's lucky thought doesn't kill. Most of my hospital staff and patients would be lying dead by now!"

"It is a gift some of our folk have from time to time though now less often. It is said that in older days it was more common. To-day men learn so many new things that they begin to lose the knowledge they had when they lived more simply. In this age there are many things they buy, no longer making them with their hands as they used to. And so perhaps they forget older matters like that speech."

Jim Harvey sat listening to Maxwell's swift interpretation of Rupa's talk, watching the keen-eyed sturdy Indian who squatted before them with his sinewy fingers playing in the rough hair of the dog curled at his feet—a great Baluch dog which his master had brought back from a tour on the frontier as a shapeless ball of fur which even then would growl though it could as yet barely stand steadily on its clumsy paws.

Rupa seemed very different from most of the Indians Jim had seen up-to-date, he was obviously a man of the jungles, not of towns nor even of the fields and villages—his noiseless walk and ever questing eyes, the swift way in which he would point out bird or beast, and his unerring instinct into the ways of animals were fascinating to study. Perhaps he was right in what he said about men

losing their simplicity with all the many luxuries and conveniences that modern life brought them, even though from Rupa's point of view, conveniences meant things like matches and cheap cotton cloth, and luxuries were cigarettes and tea.

Jim listened to the doctor, envying him his knowledge of the dialect which enabled him to learn the fascinating folk-lore of these wild peoples, the quaint stories of men and beasts which he could retail so well. He was like Kit Barrington in that respect and Jim realized that for such people India must hold a charm all its own, one quite hidden from the casual traveller like himself.

"Sometimes still there are children among us who can hear the beasts talking though most often they lose that power when they grow up. Some there are too who can talk to them themselves in talk which men cannot hear. I, Rupa, can do it a very little but only with dogs that know me. See I will wake Bup and tell him to bite the sahib's foot gently. Thus."

Maxwell listened intently, calling Jim's attention to Rupa. The doctor had often seen the trick, if trick it were, played before, but he could never fathom it. Rupa sat perfectly still—perhaps his lips moved the least trifle but there was no sound to be heard in the still room. Nevertheless suddenly Bup sat up with pricked ears and turned his great lion-like head towards the dark-faced man beside him. Then swiftly the dog got to its feet and his shaggy shoulders were above Rupa's

head as the Indian squatted. An instant later Bup advanced on the doctor and mouthed his shoe.

"Thus," said Rupa. "See, he understands. But you have heard nothing—nothing." He swept his brown hand sideways in a motion of complete negation. Then presently the dog, ignoring Maxwell's hand upon his head, turned back and curling himself up by Rupa went straight to sleep.

"Damned queer," said Jim. "Is it always the same trick?"

"No. That's the point. Sometimes he tells Bup to fetch something or other—sometimes to visit the stable and look at the horses. It's almost uncanny."

"Can he say what is the language he uses?" asked Jim.

"Yes. That's another quaint thing. He says it is something like his own but not the same. There are not very many words it seems, and according to him he couldn't say them so that we could hear them. I often wonder if there are any words at all or whether it's really a form of thought transference and Rupa pretends he is talking to make it more mysterious. But I don't think so because he's very simple in most ways and so far as I can judge he always tells me the truth. He's sort of adopted Molly and me—we saved his life, I suppose, between us once, and Molly certainly saved his wife's and the child's. He won't leave us now. Possibly it is a form of hypnotism, and since he doesn't understand that, he really does

think he's talking and that the dogs speak back to him. But yet it couldn't be really so, because that wouldn't account for what he insists, that they really do talk to him and to each other. I've tried that too—it's just as queer."

He spoke a few words to Rupa, and the Indian turned to the great dog which presently got up sleepily and stretched, and then, suddenly fully awake, walked out of the room.

"I've told him to send Bup to see if Molly is in the drawing-room," said Maxwell.

A minute later Bup trotted back and sat down by Rupa who lifted its head on to his crossed legs and then spoke to Maxwell.

"Bup says she is there," translated Maxwell. "If Rupa and Bup had been incautious enough to be born five hundred years ago and gone to Europe they'd both have been burnt for a certainty." Then both men were silent as faintly down the long passage beyond the open door they caught the sound of Mrs. Maxwell's voice calling to a servant from the drawing-room.

"It is truth you see," said Rupa, stroking the dog's head. "Bup always tells the truth—dogs do—it is only men who have learnt to lie. No—there are not many like me, perhaps three, perhaps four. One there was who was better than I, knowing the speech of many animals—a boy younger than I, born of my folk—the wanderers."

"Rupa is a wandering gipsy really," explained Maxwell. "I rather suspect that most of his folk are criminals of a sort. Probably they owned the

soil thousands of years ago before the people we know as Indians came over the Himalayas, and of course the settled men's hands have been against them ever since, and so they were forced to crime as the dispossessed always are."

"And who and where is that one?" continued the doctor reverting to the vernacular and turning to Rupa.

"I do not know now—it is long since I have seen my folk—they are to the south at present," said Rupa. "And he left us a long time ago. He was a strange child born of one of our women—it was said the child of a stranger, which may be true. But from childhood he had this gift and with him it grew stronger instead of getting less. I think he had other gifts; he had strange eyes, light eyes like stones. It was said he could read men's thoughts and because of that others feared him. There was another strange thing too; he could scent danger at a distance like an animal—you could see his nose working.

"Once he and I were playing together and suddenly he stopped quite still and I saw his nose moving just like a dog's. Suddenly he called to me, 'Stay quite still, brother—there is danger—stay still!'

"And then from the old wall by which we sat crawled out a great snake—the black Nag whose bite is death. I sat very still as did he also, and the snake lifting its head stayed swaying. But presently it folded its hood and crept away.

"How didst know Taru,' I asked, and he looked

at me with his strange eyes, and then laughed. 'I—I know many things, things that happen far away—even thoughts—I knew that Nag was there and feared that if either of us moved he might be frightened and strike. Fear makes men and beasts blind.' And then he laughed again and would say no more.

"It was that winter that he left us. There came a stranger among us, one whom the head men of our people seemed to hold in great fear—a silent man who spoke little but sometimes looked as though he could see into your head. I remember my mother said he had the evil eye. But she said that very softly and when we were by ourselves. I did not know his name—maybe he had none. But it was said that he had great magic powers and could make folk do as he wished at all times. That I saw. He made a man who was afraid of snakes even more than most, pick up two keraites whose bite is even swifter death than that of Nag. The man obeyed him and was unharmed. This he did after making the man look upon a certain bright stone which he had. And afterwards the man did whatever he said. We were much afraid of that stranger, but no man dared do anything against him though he lived as though he were headman while he was with us. And when he went the youth Taru went with him and never have I seen either again."

"Hypnotism, I imagine," commented Maxwell, selecting a cheroot from his case. "I fancy there are a lot of things like that about which the East

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knows more than we are inclined to give it credit for. But to revert to the original question; wouldn't it be worth while trying that converter of yours on Rupa and Bup and see whether there is anything in the way of real speech? If you hear nothing it will rather substantiate my theory, which is that more probably it's some kind of thought transference. Mind you, though, there's no reason why it shouldn't be a form of speech."

"It would be a most extraordinarily interesting experiment to make," said Jim. "Send him and Bup round one morning, or bring them over yourself, and we'll put on the converter and see if there is anything to hear. By the way, I've not yet been able to pick up that station which we had located as somewhere in the Punjab. Have you got any further with the language question?"

The doctor shook his head as he struck a match for his cheroot.

"No," he said at last, watching the smoke spiral upwards. I can't get it anyhow and I'm beginning to despair, which I don't often do. Renton is no further either. I wish we could get it, because I'm convinced that there's something behind it which is worth finding out, quite apart from the academic interest of adding a hitherto unknown language to my book on dialects."

"Are you two ever coming," queried Molly Maxwell's voice from the open door as she looked in. "The girls are coming to lunch in ten minutes and the first race is at two-fifteen."

Jim's unintelligible murmur was understood to

reflect adversely on the sport of kings and on the manners and morals of race-goers generally, but nevertheless he hurried away to change.

Molly Maxwell enjoyed life completely and unreservedly. She found all of it good, which is probably the secret of youth, and youth she certainly managed to keep even if her hair was grey and her friends no longer referred to her birthdays. But the thing she enjoyed most of all was any mild type of gambling, in particular that specially English form connected with horses. Race meetings were to Molly the red-letter days of the year. One not only gambled but one did it in the most pleasing surroundings in the sunshine wearing one's nicest frocks and with all the world and his wife to watch in the process. Molly adored that, and she thought that the world is often even more enthralling to watch when he is in the company of someone else's wife.

Needless to say, therefore, lunch was not allowed to drag, and Molly hustled her party with such good effect that they were down at the racecourse long before the first event. Jim's and her husband's protests were in vain; protesting idly they were swept by Molly's capable hands into the crowded mixture of Lahore society and large contingents of the rest of Northern India, all engaged in the elusive business of spotting winners.

"The family shirt is going on this afternoon, I imagine," said the doctor lugubriously, as he threaded his way behind his wife and Diana Renton towards the bookie's stand. "I know that

glint in Molly's eye. She never had any patience with the man in the parable who had one talent and wouldn't put it on the local fancy. How she does it the Lord only knows, I suppose it's her Irish blood. Presently however other people will appear, and then I shall be free to slide gently away to the drink tent." Other people were already appearing, notably the younger officers of the local Indian infantry regiment who mostly hailed from the same part of the British Isles as Molly, or the opposite corner across the water, and like her considered that horseflesh was the thing that really mattered most in this most amusing world. They owned several horses, dark in colour some of them, and the bookies watched them with the attention which is a compliment in the racing world.

Diana shared Molly's enthusiasm and did her best to infect Jim Harvey with it, and despite the fact that he had no interest in racing whatever he contrived to simulate some. He was finding that Diana's vitality was catching, her enthusiasms infectious, and beginning to wonder not a little whether wireless research alone was in truth a sufficient reason for life.

"I know Roger is going to win this afternoon," said Di. "I've been watching Captain Grey. He hasn't been near the bookies yet and that is worth noticing. My dress allowance went on *en masse*."

"And the month's housekeeping money," added Molly looking across to where Captain Grey, cheerful of countenance, beamed upon two damsels and talked as though horses were the last thing he

ever thought of. "We shall have to live on charity for the rest of the month if Roger doesn't come home."

"I shall not. I will retire to the Punjab Club and live on delicacies such as my household refuses to provide," said the doctor firmly. "What it is to have married a gambleress. Jim take notice, observe my threadbare raiment—the whiskered state of my trouserings, and be warned in time."

"Observe also the lacklustre eye which cometh of mid-day beer in the East," commented his wife. "Be warned also in time, Mr. Harvey." Her own keen eyes were roving round the gay crowd about them as she spoke, and she broke off as Kit's tall figure showed approaching in company with a dainty parasol beneath which Jean's vivacious chatter could be heard. On her other hand came a typical boxwallah, in immaculate store suiting, and Bombay bowler, a stranger to Molly Maxwell who studied him with a quick glance.

"Let me introduce Mr. Mathias," said Jean as she came up.

Mr. Mathias doffed the Bombay bowler and bowed with his best manner as Molly murmured conventional greetings. Then he slipped round to greet Jim Harvey.

"Mr. Mathias is up here for the rest of the cold weather," explained Jean. "Business, but he says its not very strenuous business. We ran into him in the Mall this morning."

"Not quite," amplified Kit. "Mr. Chrysler puts on good brakes, which is fortunate for heavy footed

ladies like Jean. We did not reach him by at least an inch and a quarter. She means we met him in the Mall. Recognition was mutual and instantaneous. A lot of people recognize Jean on the Mall now—you can see them edging off and wondering whether it will be cheaper to take a lamppost or a policeman than to try and hold the road."

"You're prehistoric, Christopher," snapped Jean. "You think one ought to keep crawling along at twenty."

"Fifteen," murmured Kit. "It's on the notice-boards all the way through Lahore."

"Well anyway we *met* Mr. Mathias and brought him here. He said he didn't know anyone in Lahore and he likes racing."

"In an ignorant fashion," explained Mr. Mathias playing with a large new pair of prismatic glasses. "But Miss Harvey promised to initiate me into the method of losing money. She tells me that a horse called Roger is carrying her wardrobe. I haven't seen it yet though I've been looking out. I have never heard of draping horses in feminine garments."

Just at that moment Diana in an excited whisper called attention to Captain Grey's movements—he seemed to be bidding farewell to the two damsels, lifting his rather rakishly tilted felt hat with a courteous motion. Simultaneously there was a rush at the bookies. Molly smiled to herself as she watched Captain Grey's brother officers and their wives fluttering notes at the perspiring bookies. In their wake came a score of Indians who evidently

had also been watching Captain Grey. Gambling is as the breath of his nostrils to the Indian, and the shopkeeping classes in particular. Fat baniahs whose clothes would have been dear at half-a-crown excitedly waved wads of notes. A moment later there was a rush to the rails as the race started. Captain Grey nonchalantly strolled towards the grandstand to get above the crowd. Roger came in with three lengths to spare and Molly Maxwell beamed with rightful content.

"Alas, I shall have to stay at home," murmured the doctor. "The housekeeping money is safe once more. The club cook is as near perfection as exists in this sadly imperfect world."

They went on to the club after the races to round off an amusing, and for the ladies profitable, afternoon. The professor had promised to come and meet them there and they introduced him to Mathias, who displayed the business magnate's usual affable interest in one who was a notable name in that world where men think more of acquiring knowledge than of making money. Mr. Mathias' business was the latter but it seemed that he admired the former.

"It's the thing that really matters," he remarked with half a sigh. "Of course we fellows who've had to get down to hard work early haven't had much chance at it. We have to spend our time using other men's brains because our own are limited by figures." He laughed deprecatingly. "I do admire you scientific people. Young Harvey there!" he indicated where Di and Jim were

dancing. "I believe he's quite brilliant in his own line of electricity."

"He is," said the professor, who admired Jim more and more for his brains and methodical study. "He'll make a name for himself before he's done. He's invented half-a-dozen things already and he's only thirty-five. Wireless is going to be an everyday thing in the future and I fancy a lot of it will be connected with his name."

Mr. Mathias' interest deepened. As he explained, he didn't understand the technicalities of such things himself—he was a pure layman. But as a financier—he used the term rather deprecatingly—he was interested in every new invention. Money and brains must go hand in hand. In fact perhaps that was the proper function of money, to help the scientist to convert his brain children into practical matters to improve the world. He used wireless himself of course in his business as he used the telephone or the aeroplane—he spoke with a childlike wonder of these matters of the abolition of time and space, seen always of course from the viewpoint of the commercial man. But as he pointed out, the trouble so often with the inventor was that he lacked the practical sense. Harvey, however, struck him as a shrewd young man—Matthias spoke from the height of some sixty years—Harvey's discoveries doubtless would always be subject to common-sense criticism.

The cessation of the music brought the dancers back and the conversation returned to a lower level—a bright and sparkling level for which Jean was

mostly responsible. Diana was for once just a little lacking in sparkle, though nobody noticed it except Jean. There might have been many reasons—on the other hand there might have been one in particular. Jean in the lull of the conversation looked thoughtfully at her brother before she sparkled again as Bob Kennedy came across the room to join the little circle.

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

CHAPTER XI

BOB KENNEDY, changing from his police uniform into mufti riding kit, selected a tie with his usual punctilious care from the array which his bearer, Faiz Ullah, had hung on a string suspended between his looking glass and the wall.

As he dressed his mind revolved round some of the various intricate problems with which he had been dealing continuously since about half-past six that morning, for he was an early riser and by breakfast time generally got through as much work as most men achieve between that meal and lunch.

Although he showed no outward sign he was worried about his charge, the rather incendiary city and district of Lahore. The Punjabi is a man of his hands, and when he indulges in crime, whether it be family feud, profitable dacoity (which means robbery under arms) or any other form that takes his errant fancy, he is liable to do so violently.

In Kennedy's opinion, the opinion of a level-headed man of much experience, Lahore and the surrounding district were distinctly inflammable at the moment. Such a state was not unfamiliar and in itself did not disturb the imperturbable Bob very much. He liked his Punjabis and he often sympathized with the criminals whom, sometimes at

personal risk to himself, he arrested. What troubled him was that at the moment he could perceive no definite reason for the inflammability.

Outwardly all ought to have made for peace and quiet and as much brotherly love as is to be reasonably expected in such a hotch potch-of races and tongues and creeds as go to make up Northern India—Northern India which is only at peace when a strong man armed holds its court, preferably an alien strong man who can hold the scales of justice impartially, one such as Baber or the Emperor Akbar, or in later times, our own proconsuls like the Lawrences.

There was no particularly notable Hindu-Moslem tension at the moment, no Mohammedans had been killing cows in ostentatious fashion before Hindu temples or converting Hindus of doubtful origin, no Hindus had been making provocative music outside Mohammedan mosques, nobody had kidnapped anybody else's women.

Even the "satanic" government seemed in passably good odour or at least was for the time being not actually harassed; the politically minded Indians were arguing in true political jargon about votes and electorates and places in councils and all these recent innovations which mean less than nothing to the ninety per cent. of the population—the peasantry who form the real India; no Commissions had been touring the continent providing opportunity for the noisy tongued agitators.

Therefore the atmosphere of the Lahore district should have been peaceful and as is the wont of

Northern India, cheerful, its daily conversation salted with Homeric laughter and Rabelaisian jests. In point of fact it was not so at all, and therefore Bob Kennedy was disturbed—disturbed because there was certainly something wrong, and yet he could lay no finger on the cause, nor even definitely locate symptoms whereon to diagnose.

However, it was now half-past four and he was due to ride with Di Renton at a quarter to five, so consigning the Punjab to its gods he finished dressing, and selected a button-hole with some care from the vase full of flowers which Faiz Ullah had placed in the sitting room. A woman would have wept over that close packed mass of highly coloured blooms, arranged cauliflower-wise in the fashion so dear to the Indian heart, but Bob was a mere man and accustomed to it. Then he passed out of the bungalow and mounted his waiting pony—a satiny-coated black waler mare who played polo in such fashion that he might have sold her for three times her original price.

He found Di waiting for him and five minutes later the two were cantering along the tan ride by the side of the canal in the direction of a certain forgotten Moghul tomb. Like most places it was surrounded by a little garden noisy with call of green parrots and dreamy with the soft flutter of pigeons' wings, birds who found shelter in its crumbling roof and ample grain from the hand of its withered old custodians. India knows exactly the right atmosphere to put about the resting places of her dead—there is life and colour, the life

of the wild birds and the bright colour of flowers, and in most Indian cities the old tombs are the picnic places of the men whose days are spent in narrow dusty streets, and women whose whole life passes in stuffy walled-in courtyards secluded from strangers' gaze, secluded also from sunshine and fresh air.

"We ought to have it more or less to ourselves to-day," commented Bob as they caught their first view of the domed roof of the old tomb, once gay with glazed tiles only a few of which still remained. Most of them had been taken from the roof to put on newer buildings, as has so often happened in India with each new invasion or new rise to power of this or that element or faith. "Thank goodness the Week is a thing of the past and one can get a chair in one's own club once more."

Di laughed. She knew Bob's views on the periodical influxes into the capitol, knew that in his heart of hearts he liked them, but she knew also that underneath his matter-of-fact mask was hidden another side to his character—that of a dreamer of dreams—a side few people ever even guessed.

"Yes," said she. "There's not likely to be anyone here to-day. Those who want to picnic will have gone to the Shalimar—the fountains play to-day."

"I prefer no fountains and no crowd," answered Bob. "But it must have been fun to be a real king, able to build gardens wherever you went. The Moghul Turk understood beauty, which is

queer considering that by trade he was a swash-buckler. But then perhaps really that's why—there's joyousness in being an honest swashbuckler. No man without a joyous mind could make a garden like the Shalimar."

"Or even like this little one," added Di, as she pulled up her horse at the gate in the old red wall through which in the evening sunlight they looked into a riot of colour, beds crowded with blossom set in quaint wild lawns overgrown here and there with rambling creepers of flame coloured flowers.

Bob hailed two urchins who were playing with queer little clay animals in the dust below the wall, and with broad grins they came running up to take the horses. They knew Bob of old, his fluent Punjabi talk, his merry eye, his swift jests in their own mother tongue. Moreover they knew him as generous to youth, a bestower of nickel coins wherewith much provender of sticky sweetmeats might be bought from the little bania's booth down the road. They were beginning to know the lady too—Bob and Di had ridden there several times since Di came back from Kashmir, and as the urchins led the horses away they discussed the matter of weddings and such like with an aplomb unthinkable in their western brethren of like age.

As the two entered the garden, from the arched verandah around the tomb, hurriedly arranging the twisted folds of his rather carelessly tied turban, the self appointed custodian emerged to greet them, an aged goat-bearded Mohammedan with wrinkled

face and puckered old eyes. Plucking a few choice blooms he offered them to Diana who took them mechanically. The ancient whose remote ancestors once drew a retaining fee from the son of the forgotten soldier whose dust lay under the long tombstone within, one who four centuries before had carved himself a fief out of the Punjab with curved sword and brass bossed shield, was accustomed to the visits of couples like Bob and Diana as his ancestors had been accustomed to visits of other men and women.

But he was more particularly interested in this couple because Bob Kennedy was an old friend of his. Many a day in past years had Bob ridden there for half an hour of a hot evening to sit in the shadow of the shrine listening to the ancient's tales of the forgotten past, of kings and queens, of princesses and princes, of love affairs which are as dear to the East as to us of the West, perhaps more so since most often marriage in the East has nothing to do with love, being a parentally arranged affair and so the heart is starved.

The aged one produced the carpet of honour—a faded threadbare rug, perhaps a couple of centuries old and laid it out on the low stone wall that the presences might not soil their breeches. The ancient was not yet quite accustomed to this modern business of breeches for English ladies nor to their most barbarous fashion of cutting off their hair and wearing it bobbed in much the same way as the youth of the fighting clans of his own race.

Then he squatted opposite regarding Diana with

polite interest and wondering when the Police sahib would take her into his household in reasonable fashion. In his opinion Kennedy was old enough to be a respectable grandfather and as yet was not even a father.

"It is many days since the protector of the poor enlightened the eyes of his servant," remarked the ancient at last. "This dustlike one has looked for your coming for many evenings now. Doubtless it is because of the office. There is much paper in the land now, where when this one was a boy there was little paper and the sahibs rode abroad among the people so that the land was ruled in its own fashion."

"That was many years ago, Badr Din," answered Kennedy with a sympathetic smile. "Now, as you say, the land is full of paper and of words."

"Aye of words," took up old Badr Din swiftly. "There is a froth of talk which is always evil. I am an old man now—a tortoise that sits blinking at the sun. But the old eyes still see something and these ears are not altogether deaf. Others come here beside the sahibs and sometimes I listen. There is a plague of words in the land—a land that was once a land of swords and men. But there are other things too now—there is more than words or so it seems. There is a wind blowing which is evil like that which from time to time has blown before, as the sahib knows."

"What wind is this?" asked Bob lighting a cigarette. It was no use offering one to the old man whose solace lay in the battered little brass

box tucked into his waistband—the tiny black balls of the “dream compeller.”

“I do not know,” said the old man, looking round the garden in the yellow evening sunlight. Diana studied him thinking what a picture he would make, the picturesque old figure in this garden so redolent of past grandeur and of forgotten sweetness.

“I do not know, but it is there. I have listened, I have talked a little with those who come and there is nothing. There is no clamour in the land at the moment for any definite thing—the crops are good by the mercy of Allah—the canals grow more and more—and men coin much silver from rich fields which were desert when I was a youth. But there is something—men wait for something they do not understand—they listen here and they listen there—there is foolish talk of wars and of riots and of all such matters, so that the land is restless and knows not why. Have you not seen it also, sahib—you whose eyes are young and keen and whose work is the laying bare of matters hidden in dark places.”

“Maybe I have—somewhat,” said Kennedy. “Maybe there is something, but like you also, I see no cause when crops are heavy, better this year than for many—when rains have been good, and there is little illness. And for once Moslem and Hindu obey the Sirkar, instead of breaking each other’s heads.” Bob smiled at the old man’s swift emphatic gesture. “Nay, Badr Din—you know it is your habit, and that therefore the Jat and the Sikh hit back as befits men.”

"It is not that, sahib—this is other. You remember the man who cast a bomb into that fair below the fort. Now wherefore? 'Twas not a Hindu festival nor a Moslem gathering. Wherefore should he throw a bomb whereby many believers and also infidels were slain, save only that he was touched by some evil wind. There is something abroad. Maybe some power of evil is loosed against the world as happens sometimes by the inscrutable ways of Allah which no man knoweth."

"Perchance a jinn," said Kennedy, who had listened to many a story of the genii from the old man's lips—of their antagonism to the sons of Adam of whom they are jealous because his seed is immortal, whereas they and theirs will perish at the last day, being created without immortal souls as every Moslem knows.

"Perchance," answered the old man gravely. "They also are the servants of Allah and do his bidding. Perchance also it may be the doing of Eblis of the Pit—the father of lies. But this much is sure, something is abroad seeking to hurt men, something of power, I have felt it pass by even here and called upon the names of Allah to be my refuge. I have felt it pass in the night and known though not seen. There is danger somewhere—there is calamity walking over the land."

Old Badr Din's tone was earnest as he leaned forward, his hand on Kennedy's knee. Then suddenly he changed the subject.

"The Miss sahib came not here to listen to the croakings of an old man—she is young, she came

for the sunlight and the garden, the garden of the Princess Zohra wherein afterwards she made the tomb of her husband Khan Bahadur the tall—the bravest sword of all the Punjab. But the sun goes and the shadows come. I will show the Miss sahib the tomb and the resting place of the princess beyond.”

He rose to his feet and Diana and Bob followed him into the building, lit faintly by the rays of the sinking sun and he pointed out the plain unornamented tomb that covered the dust of the bravest sword of the Punjab, and then out once more to the garden behind where in a smaller building lay that of his wife, the Princess Zohra, nothing but the carved writing board to show that it was a woman who lay below the old symbolism of the passive half of life to match the pen case on the man's grave yonder.

Diana knew something of that love story, she had listened to Badr Din's telling of it in his old-world Urdu, interlarded with odd Persian phrases, relics of the days when he and his were indeed servants of a court. Somehow she felt that whatever evil might be abroad—she could follow the talk between Bob and Badr Din—it would not come nigh to that peaceful little garden where death spelt only peace and sweet memories. She looked back as they rode away, two capering urchins rejoicing behind them. Yes, peace seemed written there in the doorway where the ancient looked out after them.

“It's quaint, that belief in jinns,” remarked

Kennedy on the way home. "Most races have some definite kind of belief in spiritual beings good and bad, but this is different—the jinn is not in the same class. He's altogether like a man and yet with marvellous powers. I've often wondered whether the Jews didn't believe in something of the same sort. There's that rather incomprehensible remark in the Old Testament about the sons of God and the daughters of men, that nobody seems to understand. On the face of it it seems to indicate something more than the question of two races or two religions at war."

Diana, whose mind was really much more occupied with the atmosphere of the old world garden they had just left, listened to him as he followed out his theme rather as though thinking aloud. He had got into the way of doing that with her often now and she found it extremely attractive—as it must always be for a woman when a clever man pays her the compliment of letting her listen to his thoughts. It was one of many points which attracted her to the policeman—a good basis for a real and lasting friendship as it had seemed to be at first. Only now it was changing much—she knew that friendship would not be enough for Bob indefinitely, and she was no longer sure of herself, indeed she had been anything but sure ever since that night at the fancy dress ball. She must get sure of herself quickly and settle it once and for all. And if she had to settle it the other way . . . Once again Diana had the unwonted feeling of not being definite, of not

knowing her own mind. Bob Kennedy had come to be very much to her and she would hate the idea of losing his friendship. . . .

She switched her mind over to his argument and resolutely put other things away for the moment as he continued.

"One seems nearer to understanding such things better out here I always think. You can see the overlay of races, the marks of history show clearer than in the West where we've all more or less merged. Here there are sharp-cut cleavages between the strata of humanity; you can see the elemental passions so much more clearly, and most of all the hates of the supplanted peoples. If there were anything in the idea, any possibility that some of the older type still exist and really possessed some of the old powers that common superstitions seem to indicate they once did, well one could think Badr Din really had come across something. . . ."

"What idea?" asked Di, genuinely puzzled for the moment.

Kennedy laughed.

"Why, my own rather mixed train of thought. The idea of some race of beings that existed before man as we know him now, before the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve as we sometimes call ourselves and as the Mohammedan always calls men and women. Suppose there had been such a race of beings and man supplanted it—perhaps almost drove it from the earth. Any survivors would not love him and their jealousy would be

as great as that of the jinns is supposed to be. And that makes one think of Lillith, who according to Badr Din was Adam's first wife. Her children would hardly love mankind."

He broke off with another laugh. "I'm wandering, Di. Too many files in the office of late and too much brain work. I must cultivate Kit Barrington and get down to the brass tacks of life, to horses and guns and sensible things. We must fix up a shoot next time he comes over and get away into the outer world where there are no cobwebs. Or else go and listen to Badr Din with his stories of the loves of forgotten princes and princesses. And you shall think you're the princess of the story." As Bob said that, the longing to see Di really fill that rôle became very intense indeed, for he had been only a friend all this last month, holding very loyally to his promise to himself to leave her free to make her own mind clear.

For the rest of the way home he thought no more of his work and of his talk with the old guardian of the tomb as he told Diana stories of the East—folklore and history and tales picked up in his daily contact with the people he served and understood so well. He might well have been a wandering minstrel, thought Di, as she listened to him, riding home in the lengthening shadows and wondering for the hundredth time whether he would get the answer he wanted next time he asked her seriously to be his princess.

Then they turned into the big garden of Professor Renton's house and so back to life as it is with

electric lights and telephones, and nothing to recall the stories of long ago princesses.

In the drawing-room they came upon Jim and Doctor Maxwell deep in some abstruse discussion. Jim thought Diana considerably more desirable than ever before, which may have been due to something in her eyes or may have been because Bob Kennedy was with her and he felt envious. Wireless seemed far less interesting nowadays.

Presently, however, Di went off to change from breeches to skirts and the three men sat talking over their drinks, pursuing the theme on which Jim and the doctor had been engaged when Di and Bob returned.

"You know," said the doctor, my theory is that superstitions are mostly built up on uncomprehended facts. They're like the stories children might make up about electricity, for instance, if there was no one to teach them. Men—savages perhaps—have come across things they don't understand and woven superstitious beliefs around them. But there has always been a substratum of truth. Take for instance that suggestion of yours about the power of killing by thought. I don't suppose that in itself it ever could be possible. But killing by electricity is quite another matter—it's a proven fact. And one thing which we do know quite definitely is that we live by electricity, electricity is the body's motive force. We're dynamos or batteries, whichever way you like to take it, probably both. The brain is definitely an electrical machine and therefore thought is probably

in some way an electrical function even if the ego behind is, as some people think, an immaterial being. If we only really understood the whole business of that electrical aspect of the body we could do all sorts of things, telepathy would be an obvious power of man simply using his brain as a wireless transmitter or receiver. And so, given sufficient power, it might be possible to project one's own electrical impulses to others to make them think and do as you wished. You might even short circuit their brains and cause the power to run down and die. Finally in an extreme case you might even force their brains to make them do things to their own disadvantage such as stepping in front of a train. You're getting very near to killing by thought then, aren't you?"

"Thinking of your Chinaman, Maxwell," remarked Kennedy, and the remark was more of a statement than a question.

"I was, as a matter of fact. That theory of mine would fit together a tangle which seems incomprehensible if approached in any other way. If it is the solution, then there's all the more need for Harvey here to get on with those wireless researches he's been neglecting of late, and for Renton and me to find out how to translate that language. If my suggestion is near the facts, then there's a power of infinite danger abroad in the world."

"Which," interpolated Kennedy, "is precisely what Badr Din at Khan Bahadur's tomb has been telling me in considerably simpler language. Only

he doesn't put out any theories to explain it, he just says he realizes it." He gave the other two the gist of his conversation in the old garden that afternoon.

"It's more than possible," said the doctor gravely, getting up and walking over to the fire, for the evening was cold. "As I've often said before the world is full of trouble just now. Suppose there is a man—one must presume a man since such very material things as wireless telephony come in, also I'm an agnostic where spirits are concerned—suppose there is a man who has got hold of some natural power that the rest of the world knows nothing about, some power enabling him to influence people's thoughts. That man could by degrees make the world do whatever he wanted, because man in the mass is easier to deal with than as an individual. We've all seen mob violence here in this very place. Jim hasn't, but he's probably seen it elsewhere, anyway he's seen crowd psychology in war. Think what it would mean to be able to sway mob thoughts . . . ! And that in a world where we trying always to level out, to lop off the heads of the big men so as to put them on a level with the rest of the dwarfs. That means doing away with the herd's safeguard—the leaders who might keep mobs sane in time of trouble. We of the West have been encouraging what we call democracy—in other words government dictated by the mob—crowd psychology." The doctor stopped and stared into the glowing fire and the other two men sat silent, watching his

tall figure with the slightly stooping shoulders, for he had a way of holding his hearers when he chose to talk seriously. There was just a trace of the seer in him that would have been hard for the outside world to reconcile with their idea of the quiet humourist and the kindly practical doctor they knew.

“ Strikes, revolutions, wars and threats of wars. Is it all merely sporadic or is it all connected? Not, of course, in the way the fanatics maintain, one party attributing everything to the wicked bolshevik or the vicious capitalist, another to the even wickeder labour leader or the more vicious Tory and so on—each putting everything he dislikes to the credit or discredit of his pet antipathy. Capitalists, labour leaders, Tories, bolsheviks, they’re all merely puppets born of the momentary need in the particular locality. But what if there was a power behind them all, utterly unknown to them and to the world, fomenting revolution here and reaction there, swaying nationalism in Egypt and internationalism in Berlin, stirring labour in Europe and capital in America, playing always on mob psychology as a musician might play on an instrument, each string apparently sounding its own particular note and yet to the ear beyond, the whole blending to the desired chord. Only in this case to discords that would disintegrate a world. . . .”

The doctor straightened his shoulders, turned back to the light with a half laugh and looked at his watch. “ Flying off the handle to-night,” he

apologized. "Probably Badr Din's evil wind has caught me. I must return to Molly and a dinner jacket and the common sense that deals only with facts and ignores fancies. Can I give you a lift, Kennedy?"

Kennedy accepted with gratitude, it was better than walking and he had sent his horse home. But most particularly he wanted to have another word or two with the doctor who was in an expansive mood. One did not often succeed in getting Maxwell to theorise like this and Kennedy felt it was illuminating.

When he was dressing for dinner that night he pondered a long time over the closing remark which the doctor had dropped as he decanted Kennedy at his own door.

"I wonder how many flies ever realize the spider behind the web."



"It's rather wonderful," said Di. She sat with Jean Harvey looking at Jim's instruments ranged all round his workroom, complicated switchboards, and all the usual accessories of the wireless expert. But even to Di's inexperienced eyes there was a definite note of neatness in the things she saw, a certain personal something that stamped them with a touch of their owner's character as she conceived it. Had she been an expert herself she would have realized more fully how true her impression was. In his own way Jim was a genius at instrument design, as regards both efficiency and portability, and they showed it.

"Rather wonderful," she repeated, and Jean nodded her trimly shingled head in sisterly pride; she could safely do so since the designer was not in the room.

"Jim really is a marvel," commented Jean. "Some day he's going to put some of those things on the market and then he'll be a rich man and won't know in the least what to do with the money—he has few ideas on that side of life. Someone would have to teach him."

The opening of the door stopped further conversation on that point, since it heralded the arrival of Jim followed by Maxwell and Rupa, the

big dog Bup stepping not altogether unsuspiciously in their rear. But it did not stop the trend of Diana's thoughts, which were trying to picture what Jim would be like in two month's time when Jean had become Mrs. Kit Barrington and betaken herself to Ferozepur and the wandering existence of the soldier's wife's life, more gipsy-like than ever when the said soldier belongs to the Indian army. She thought Jim would find himself very lonely, indeed it would not be unfair to consider him as a small boy suddenly bereft of his nurse. Jean had delightfully and attractively filled a rôle not unlike that for several years now. Jim, who had grown accustomed to it, would be lost without her.

Bup wandered suspiciously round the room nosing here and there, and then came over to the girls to proffer morning greetings in his independent way. He was not a demonstrative dog but he had a few friends among whom Di Renton held a high place.

"That's the converter," explained Jim to Maxwell, showing him the neat little instrument. "We'll connect it up to that circuit by the board over there, and make Rupa sit just under the microphone to do some of his tricks with Bup."

"I wonder if we shall hear anything," said Di, who had been looking at the gleaming converter with ignorant but unfeigned interest. "Have you ever heard anything?"

"Not speech," answered Jean. "But we heard various odd sounds at home after connecting it with the kennel circuit we'd put up. We could

hear the puppies talking after they'd been fed—just too delicious for words, all sorts of contented noises. They were absolutely real dog talk, you could just imagine what each one was feeling like—good and bulgy all over.” Jean’s smile at the recollection argued much happiness for Kit—she was a delightfully mother-cum-sister type.

Jim busied himself fixing connections to a switchboard, and while he was doing so Jean explained to Maxwell and Di the way in which they had made their experiments in Sussex. Rupa sat near with Bup and there was something of the dog’s slight suspiciousness in the man’s attitude. They two were not so very far apart in character, both in the swift senses and in their independence and aloofness of character.

Maxwell, who was no mechanic, listened to Jim’s running fire of instructions, and presently when the connections were attached shepherded Rupa and Bup to their place below the microphone, where they sat with the uncomfortable air of people about to have their photograph taken.

“One minute,” remarked Jean. “We may as well fit on the recording apparatus.” She slid a phonograph into position by the converter, slipping a cylinder on to the carrier. “Now if Doctor Maxwell will tell Rupa to talk to Bup we’ll get a record. Tell him to send Bup to see what Di has in her hand.”

The doctor spoke to Rupa and then turned on the phonograph. Rupa made some remark in a questioning tone to the doctor and was answered

and then he turned towards the dog, seemingly in silence. Of his speaking a few words, however, there was no question, the loudspeaker above the phonograph recorded them faithfully—a quaint singsong speech, strange to the doctor who listened with a puzzled expression. Then in the silence that followed, Bup walked over towards Di and nuzzled at her hand. It might easily have been done by an indication of Rupa's hand or by the direction of his glance, for the big dog was watching his face, but what was quite unmistakable was the single rather liquid sound which came suddenly from the loudspeaker on Bup's return to Rupa where he stood wagging his tail slowly and looking round over his shoulder.

"He says she has a bone there," said Rupa.

"He smelt it, of course," said Di, holding up the meaty bone she had been hiding.

"But Rupa couldn't have seen it," objected Maxwell with emphasis. "He might have smelt it too, of course. But was it he or the dog that made that noise we heard on the converter?"

"There was no noise from either that I could hear," said Jim. "I was only a foot away from them both. Try it again."

"Call Bup over, Di," said Maxwell, and then spoke swiftly to Rupa telling him to say when the dog might have the bone. He knew Bup would take food from no one without his or Rupa's permission.

The dog came back to Di and laid his head on her lap where she held the attractive morsel, though

he would not touch it. But he did not look back at Rupa nor even at Maxwell, only his cocked ears showed his attention. Suddenly the loudspeaker spoke again—two words only and then the following silence was broken by Bup's beautiful teeth gritting on the bone he had taken.

"Well I'm damned!" remarked Jim. "It is true. I'll swear that Rupa never spoke."

"I was listening most carefully," corroborated Jean. "It's almost uncanny to think of."

They made several more experiments after that, most of them successful, and the wonder of it deepened. Somebody, either dog or man, spoke in that room at intervals, though none of the other four human beings could catch a single sound except through the converter. They took off the loudspeaker and listened in with earphones so as to make sure that in listening to the loudspeaker ~~they had not~~ missed some whisper of Rupa. But no, there was still no sound to be heard from the Indian's lips, and the quaintest part was that what the loudspeaker rendered was not Rupa's ordinary dialect which Maxwell knew.

"What do you talk to the dogs," he asked at last. "It is not your ordinary talk."

"It is only a little different," answered Rupa. "This is the dog talk—it is other with the birds, but I can only hear that a little and not talk it at all."

The doctor, with a dissatisfied air, went over to the phonograph, and reversing the mechanism switched it on, to listen to the record, a curious

record with Rupa or the dog or both uttering the meaningless words, punctuated here and there with Maxwell's and Jim's remarks, Jean's swift comments, and Di's questions. He ran it over three times, listening carefully. Then he decided that Rupa was honest—it was a form of his own speech curiously clipped and accented, there were words definitely recognizable now at the fourth time of hearing—there were others he did not know at all. The few monosyllabic sounds presumably made by the dog were in a timbre quite different from that of the other voice and were quite unfamiliar.

“What does that mean?” he asked Rupa, switching the phonograph on again for an instant and then stopping it.

“She is holding a bone,” translated Rupa, and the doctor nodded. It was the liquid noise Bup—at least presumably it was Bup—had uttered on his return to Rupa the first time.

“I shall believe all the stories in the Jungle Books now!” said Diana, looking at Rupa and Bup. “It's marvellous!”

“What are all these bright things for?” queried Rupa, suddenly waving his hand towards the instruments. He was getting bored with this business.

“They enable men to hear what others are saying a long distance away,” explained the doctor. “With these we can hear what folk say in England, what men say in Bombay.” Rupa nodded—he had seen Bombay once and considered it an

impossible place for man or dog. Undoubtedly this was a wonderful business to be able to hear what men said in Bombay, though why anyone should want to listen to the talk of people who dwelt in a beehive like that passed his simple comprehension. It seemed a poor compensation for not being able to hear things right up against your own good ears, what Bup said about people for instance, and the names he gave them. Rupa could not have translated those well, though he made efforts later in subsequent conversations with the doctor. Bup's names mostly connected with smells. Jean was the lady who smelt like the grass the first thing in the morning. Mrs. Maxwell was connected with sweet cakes for which Bup had considerable weakness and never waited for anybody's permission when Molly offered him such things.

"Switch on to something outside," said Jean to her brother as she disconnected the phonograph and put the record carefully away. "There's nothing in England at this hour—England is decently in bed and the only sound would be the milkman going his rounds—we're five hours ahead out here. But we might get a vernacular entertainment from Bombay or something out of Columbo. I'd like to watch Rupa listening to that."

But both she and Jim forgot about the converter which had been attached, and when they had finally connected with the roof aerial and switched on there was blank still silence. "Nothing doing

at this hour, old girl," remarked Jim as he played with the tuning handle. Then suddenly he saw that the converter was still attached and called to Jean to remove it so that they could pick up normal sounds.

She had her hands on the terminals when she stopped abruptly, stopped because Diana, who had on the earphones, suddenly held up her hand.

"There's something coming through—very sharp and clear, something I can't understand. Unless I'm wrong it's your funny language again."

Jim Harvey jumped for the other pair of earphones and listened. Yes, Diana was right! Sharp and clear, close by, he judged, that is, within a few measurable miles, was his lost station talking—he recognized the pitch of the voice he had heard so often in England. Diana passed her phones to Maxwell, and the doctor listened excitedly to the puzzling speech.

It was then that Rupa spoke. Like Bup he could pick up the atmosphere of excitement. Even stolid Bup was a little interested, wondering what was happening—possibly as some people say the dogs see us not as we see ourselves, but more as the spiritualists say we are with auras of varying colours which change with the emotions. Possibly Bup saw the auras' changing hue. Anyway, he began to fidget excitedly, wondering if there were something alive hidden among the glittering instruments and gleaming wires. Rupa had to catch him by the collar as he spoke.

"Is it people talking from far off?" he asked again.

"Yes—you listen," answered the doctor. "Hold that to your ears." He turned to Jean. "Couldn't we connect up the loudspeaker again and make a record of this, too?" Jean busied herself swiftly. Jim was hurriedly unpacking more instruments from another box. This was his lost station and if he couldn't pin it down within a mile or two this time his name was not Jim Harvey and his researches vain.

The loudspeaker was re-attached and the quaint toneless speech filled the room. Jean reconnected the phonograph and put a new cylinder into place.

Then Rupa electrified the doctor and subsequently the rest of the room with his sudden quiet remark.

"These be surely some of my folk speaking," said he. "It is not easy to hear, doubtless that is because of all these wires. It seems far away and perhaps the wind makes it difficult to follow. But it sounds like the talk of my own folk."

Then the doctor suddenly realized what had been puzzling him all that morning as he had listened to the loudspeaker. Something linked together in his mind. The old gipsy dialects; the lost language from which he was convinced they all derived. He stared at Rupa. Then as the loudspeaker died suddenly into silence he spoke.

"I think Rupa has given it to us," said he. The others turned wonderingly to him.

"He says it is his folk talking. It isn't, as a matter of fact. That is obviously impossible. None of his people are likely to own wireless telephones. But it's the missing link. With luck we shall have a translation of some of these records within the next ten days." And in his enthusiasm, forgetting all about the rest of the company, he plunged down the stairs to Renton's study to find the professor immersed in a packet of old scripts received from Central Asia, where another professor, like minded to himself, was laboriously excavating in the deserts, digging up records of forgotten civilizations.

"Got it, Renton!" he shouted. "Got it!"

Renton looked up from his papers and stared at his friend who was striding up and down the room in excitement.

"Got it. Got what?"

"The language, man! The thing we've been looking for all this time. Your man Harvey's language! But I think we've got something more with it. We're very near my missing link language that I've always declared must have existed and so many fools have jeered at me for saying it. Here, look!" He caught up pencil and paper and scribbled upon it quite regardless of the fact that the paper was an abstruse thesis in manuscript by an illustrious professor in Paris who wanted Renton's view on a certain theory.

Renton studied the three words written in a line. They were all quite unfamiliar and he said so.

"Yes, they would be," snapped the doctor. "But take the first, doesn't matter what it means. Would phonetic laws convert it to the second?"

"Undoubtedly," agreed Renton, suddenly keenly interested. "Given certain climatic and racial conditions—yes almost certainly."

"Then look at the third. See the shift of the *ph* to *s* and the elision of the second consonant. It's what I've always maintained was the obvious change to look for. My paper on that drew fire and brimstone from half the university towns in Germany upon my grizzled head. Is it what you'd expect?"

"Yes, if I adhered to your theory which, as a matter of fact I did in spite of the fire and brimstone." Renton smiled at the memories of the acrimonious correspondence which had followed Maxwell's paper on the subject being published in England.

"But what are the forms anyhow, and where did you get them?" he continued.

Maxwell caught the paper from him and scribbled half a dozen more words into them, finishing with the low German for "bone," and Renton suddenly saw daylight. The phonetic changes through the series were logical enough, though long before the end the words had become utterly dissimilar.

"What are the last three?" he asked.

"Number one is the word in Rupa's people's dialect. Number two is a much older variant that I found in an old folk song—Rupa says it's gone out now and none of his people would

understand it. The third is the noise which Bup made when Diana was hiding a bone."

The doctor gave a swift incisive description of the experiment upstairs and finished it breathlessly as he and the professor went up the stairs at a pace unbelievable in people of their age. They burst into Jim's workshop and demanding repetitions of phonograph records, they argued in language which no one, not even Di, could follow, though she had some slight inkling of their meaning. They gabbled strange words at each other and generally behaved like lunatics, so that Bup caught the prevailing excitement and barked sharply at them.

Finally the sound of the lunch bell brought the saner members of the party downstairs leaving the two linguists still arguing.

"What on earth does all that gibberish mean, Di?" asked Jean as they sat down to lunch. "You can follow it, can't you? It all sounds Greek to me."

"It's this way," answered Di. "Doctor Maxwell evolved a theory some time ago that all languages derived from some one language which has been lost. You know how French and Roumanian and Italian and Spanish all derive more or less from Latin, and how scientists have built up laws showing how the words changed. Somebody traced the connection between Latin and Greek and Sanscrit and various other languages in the East all spoken about the same time, most of them are now dead. The doctor took the thing a step

further, arguing that by following the same process you'd be able to rebuild the original language that was spoken by the first men who did speak. It all hinges on knowing certain laws by which different races change different letters. I mean take *w* and *gu* as a very simple example. If you change those two about you'll find a lot of French and English words which sound quite different are really the same. And there are heaps of similar laws."

"I get you," said Jim. "And now the doctor thinks that he's got something connecting this language spoken by Rupa and the unknown one we've been hearing."

"Something like that only more so," answered Di. "He's a tremendous enthusiast and will always jump miles farther than anyone else can see. In the way he's explaining it to Daddy, not only has he got the clue for the language you people heard, but he got the connection between that and the noise Bup makes. He's a firm evolutionist of course."

"And now not only is my miserable body going to proclaim my direct birth from the ape, but my very words are to be used against me in evidence of my animal descent," said Di lugubriously.

"I get you, Di. Jean, let us fly from this place—we shall be growing tails next."

Jean gurgled with laughter at the prospect and then pointed the moral further.

"Yep, Jim. Up to date we could at least say that we are a long way from monkeys because we

have speech. Now that very speech is going to bridge the gap. I feel scratchy already." She gave her famous imitation of a monkey who has not met Keatings and her audience laughed themselves to tears.

Diana rose from the table and departed to return shortly with the two men of science driven before her as sheep to the slaughter. They were to feed, she had decreed. After that they might be free. Of course Maxwell hadn't thought of telephoning to his long suffering Molly—she, Di, would do that. She planted them at table where they continued to maintain an animated and utterly incomprehensible dialogue in swiftly flowing words.

From the hall came the sound of Di's voice punctuated by laughter as she explained the situation to Molly Maxwell, telling her to come swiftly and join the monkey house. Then she returned and the learned men pretended to eat under her eagle eye until such time as with some pretence at decency they could flee to Renton's study to pursue their researches.

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

CHAPTER XIII

THE hospital saw little of Maxwell for the next few days, and their respective households saw as little of either him or the professor. They worked in each other's studies at all hours of the day and night—they took meals at uncertain intervals—the professor's times of sleep were more erratic than even in the bad days when Diana was at school in England. His study was a haze of tobacco smoke, shadowing a litter of paper and open books scattered over tables and chairs. In the midst of this, such people as came to the door heard strange arguments in uncouth jargons and fled incontinently. Molly and Di washed their hands of their respective charges.

But at last one morning after an all-night sitting calm, temporary calm, descended upon Renton's and Maxwell's bungalows. The professor appeared at breakfast newly bathed and shaven, with a keen light in his blue eyes, and looking nothing the worse for the period of feverish activity from which he had emerged. He laid a folded paper upon the table beside him and demanded coffee.

"We've done it," he vouchsafed presently to Jim's questioning glance and Jean threw her napkin ring into the air. Di beamed upon the breakfast company with the air of a mother whose firstborn

really has at last learned laboriously how to spell: "The cat sat on the mat and the rat came in."

"Maxwell will be over directly," went on the professor, "and we'll get down to it. He was right about the importance of it—it's obviously intensely old—something that will shake philological circles to the core. And also," the professor turned to Jim, "something that will give you work—you and Bob Kennedy."

"Dirty work at the cross roads," cooed Jean in joyous slang.

Further aspirations were checked by the entrance of Molly Maxwell and the doctor.

"No thanks; we've had breakfast," explained Molly; "the first Christian meal for days, Di. I've brought him over here myself. I gather that he and your father are going to prove beyond all shadow of doubt that we are the direct and unmistakable descendants of tailless apes—our speech betrayeth us."

"Not altogether," said the professor; "that's a further step that may or may not follow."

"Let's have the worst now," demanded Jean. "What's at the other end?" And then as the professor began to explain, her hilarity a little evaporated, because it was clear that they had somehow stumbled upon something compared with which gunpowder might reasonably be considered mild and innocuous.

"It's the translation of the first record which I've got here—almost complete—the one you

picked up at home. There are a few gaps which we'll bridge presently, but the main sense is clear. You took this one in August, wasn't it?" Professor Renton polished his pince-nez and consulted his notes regardless of his cooling breakfast.

"Record number one?" asked Jean, and the professor nodded. "That was at High Oak," she corroborated, and then thought of the Sussex house and all that had happened there. They had been well filled and satisfying months followed by others even fuller and better. But she brought her practical little mind back swiftly to the present and the professor's talk.

"This is what we make of it," said he. "It's a series of orders to certain people whose names are not specified. Possibly they don't use names unless these odd references to the planets are code names. It's a slightly hotch potch language too, which made it still more difficult to translate and read."

"An old language which had to be amplified to meet modern conditions of life," commented Maxwell. "Whoever invented or resurrected it had catholic ideas, because he borrowed wholeheartedly from a dozen languages, French and German, Italian, Turkish, Arabic and Russian with a little English here or there for luck. The mechanical terms are English, which probably means at some period of his life the designer was in England or America perhaps studying engineering."

"After all, Daddy," interrupted Di, "the origins

don't matter much. What is it all about?" She had come round behind his chair to see the papers, and the others gathered closer to hear the solution of this thing which had puzzled them so long.

"All right, I'll read some of it." He picked up the paper and read slowly as follows :

" 'Tension in the western islands growing stronger. Struggle regarding use of gold inevitable. Worklessness to be employed as moving force by circle in ' we can't read the bit that follows,' added the professor in parenthesis, then he continued, " 'middle west strongly national—feeling growing. Central body to keep in touch with flag parties and aid their plans. Inevitable result will be war within or without . . . ' "

"In other words, war or revolution," paraphrased the doctor. "Queer synonym they use for keeping in touch, literally 'feeling and scenting'. The original language was fairly primitive, as you'd expect, unless of course you were a Heidelberger." Maxwell snorted a little and thought of the scorpionlike pamphlets with which he would presently lash some of his philological opponents on the continent.

"Don't interrupt," snapped his wife, who was getting interested as the professor continued.

" 'Soviet system gaining ground towards birth centres in guise of trade and cheap food. Mother of Cities circle will report whether national or international measures will produce greatest disturbance.' "

"Largely guesswork, but a most interesting

paragraph that," interrupted the doctor again. "‘Herd or pack life’ we guessed could mean nothing but Soviet. ‘Birth Centre’ is what any student with a little grey matter could translate at once as Central Asia—I’ve always maintained that that was the birthplace of man in his present form . . ."

"After he’d shed his tail, dear," cooed Molly.

"And," went on her husband imperturbably, "‘The Mother of Cities’ is certainly Balkh—the term probably means Afghanistan generally."

"‘Unsatisfactory reports from middle south. General tendency to inertia following on abundant crops and growing taste for imported luxuries, especially mechanical. Commercial circles will attend to this immediately and arrange to force up food prices. Pending their action religious branch will stimulate friction. The Master will receive middle south reports in person.’"

The professor paused and looked round upon the circular of eager listeners about him. "It ends there," he said, and then suddenly realized that his coffee was stone cold.

"What on earth is it all?" asked Molly Maxwell as she fitted a cigarette into her long amber holder. "Escaped lunatics talking?"

"Hardly," replied her husband. "Can't you see that it's an extraordinary clever organization of sorts with widespread circles all over the world evidently trying to organize general unrest. What for, of course, we don't know yet. We may presently when we've translated some more

messages. But it's clearly wide in its activities and with agents in every country. Middle west presumably means Italy and the new little European countries round. They are all flag wagging rather violently, so they've to be kept keyed up until something bursts. The middle south is apparently regrettably quiet—I've a feeling that that means India. It's therefore to be stirred up by juggling with food prices and helping on communal trouble among other things. What a happy world the Master is making for us? I wonder who he is?"

"That precisely is where Bob Kennedy is going to come in I think," said Jim, who up to date had sat silent. But like the doctor he felt that the thing was big, and at the thought he realized suddenly the first keen joy of the chase. Other men spent their days combating subversive organizations up and down the world, fighting crime and criminals. But here was something beside which the rest was mere hunting of mice. Here was a real world organization—that is what it seemed indeed to be—using every lever to move its dupes. And barring themselves, no one knew anything of it. Without his converter no one could know anything. He had laid bare their wires and the professor and the doctor had deciphered their speech. This would be a hunt worth following.

That also was Bob Kennedy's opinion when, in response to a telephone call from the professor, he came over that evening and was told of the first record which they had translated. The

policeman realized that here indeed was work worth doing, and that since it was as yet so nebulous, it must remain in his own hands until he had more to go upon.

He was still thinking about it that night after dinner when Faiz Ullah appeared to say that Bakshi Ram was outside and wished to see him. To Bob the visit seemed a coincidence. It was Rupa who had unconsciously given the doctor the clue which led to the translation of those wireless messages—it was Rupa who had talked of a boy who had that strange trick of twitching his nostrils—it was Bakshi Ram who had been with Kennedy when a Saddhu with the same trick had crossed their path.

A minute later Bakshi Ram entered the room, leaving his heavy shoes at the doorway as Indian politeness demands—logical custom when the proper furniture of an Indian house is rugs of greater or less value, and chairs are not used save only by the most modern in copy of European ways.

“Well, Bakshi Ram, it is many days since I have seen you,” said Kennedy, looking at the Hindu’s tall lithe figure and clean cut features. Bakshi Ram was a Brahmin, a Dogra Brahmin from the foothills of Kulu, and he had the combination of traits of his race and caste—men who have been stubborn fighters through long centuries ever since they fell back into the hills to a hard life rather than yield to the sway of the invading Mohammedan.

Bakshi Ram emphasized the length of time since he had last seen the sahib and enquired after many matters and many folk whom they knew in common. Bakshi Ram was a Brahmin and a Hindu. Bob Kennedy was altogether alien, and for nothing would the Dogra have touched food or drink from Bob's hand even in these days of loosening customs.

But apart from that, Bob stood to him on the same footing as many of the mythical heroes of his race—a man to be followed faithfully through thick and thin, one whose courage was such as the gods might envy, and Bakshi Ram's own courage was of a high standard, rendered the higher by his intense pride of race and caste. And that after all is, and always has been, the real meeting point of East and West since the days of Saladin and Richard Cœur de Lion, the respect and admiration and friendship thereof begotten which lies between two real men. Both Bakshi Ram and Bob Kennedy, looking upon the world about them, were inclined to think that the present age is beginning to forget it, seeking vainly for meeting points on planes where East and West can never meet, being diametrically opposite in hope and thought.

The talk slid East and the talk slid West around it and about as Eastern custom demands. The matter at heart never appears until well towards the end of the visit. It came at last a good half hour later, and as Kennedy had suspected, it dealt with a certain Saddhu whom both knew.

"I have seen him again, sahib," said Bakshi Ram. "This time there is no doubt. He is here in the district and, I think now, close to Lahore. What it is he does I do not know yet—but I shall know soon. That is why I am here, for there is evil toward. Evil is that man's shadow. But as yet there is nothing such as you might act upon—as is known there must be witnesses and evidence and papers and writing, and there are no such things as may be produced before magistrates. Whether or not he had had hands in the deaths of which you and I know none can say. I think—indeed I am sure. You also think—" Kennedy nodded—he had thought a great deal. "But I watch and soon maybe crooked things will be made straight and the sahib will get credit, though indeed I know it is not your fashion to seek it."

"A snake will have been scotched," said Kennedy, "and that is a greater matter."

"A great matter indeed," assented Bakshi Ram. "And this one is such a snake as has not often been seen if that which I think be true. If there be permission I go now—I watch, and in three or maybe four days I will come again or perhaps send word of that which I shall have seen."

Kennedy gave permission—the permission which eastern etiquette demands from the host for the visitor to withdraw, and Bakshi Ram went out into the night, where for a time he squatted, talking quietly with Faiz Ullah and the policeman who acted as Bob's orderly, who, being wife's brother's son to Bakshi Ram, might be safely

trusted. Bakshi Ram was somewhat nervous, possibly with, possibly without, reason. Not a few folk bore grudges to Kennedy; not honest criminals, but people of less favourable type. Kennedy was a man who knew much, indeed none quite knew what he did know. It would be well to scrutinize carefully those who entered the compound. But of these things one could not, of course, talk to the sahib, who would only laugh. Faiz Ullah and the constable nodded gravely and added that the cook was beyond reproach—for seven years now he had been growing rich at the sahib's expense. Bakshi Ram who, after his fashion, loved Kennedy, departed feeling more comfortable.

For the next week the professor and the doctor continued with their self-appointed task of translating cylinder after cylinder of the phonograph records made by Harvey, and day by day Bob Kennedy found it necessary to come in of an evening to hear what further they had found. Of the gravity of their discovery there could no longer be any doubt—they had tapped the private means of communication of some world-wide organization whose main object was to foster world unrest in whatever form it could be stirred up.

"It's not national, like any of the things we've had to deal with before," remarked Maxwell one night. "It's not political in the narrow sense, or seditious in the way we've been accustomed to use the term up to date. It's world wide, and

what the object may be we've no idea as yet. Nor can we say where the directing brain may be nor what his plans are. It's going to be the most extraordinarily difficult thing to trace down."

"There's the wireless stations," said Jim Harvey who was curled up in a chair opposite the doctor. "It's been silent again this last week, damn it! but the first time it comes on I'll pin it down and then the thing is to raid it and see who's there."

"A difficult thing to do when you've really got so little to go on," suggested Bob. "There's no particular law against using a wireless out here nor against speaking a dead language."

"Nevertheless it's the only way to handle it. It would be the first step if only we could connect the voices with definite human beings. You might be able then to connect them with other activities that would fetch them inside the reach of the law," answered Jim.

"When we do get in touch with them it's probably going to be not unexciting," remarked Bob. There was a pleased glint in his eyes at the prospect, for he thought that the people who were organizing this would be no ordinary folk—they would probably be as dangerous game as any man could want to hunt and unlikely to stick at anything.

The constant visits to Renton's bungalow, of course, meant seeing Diana more frequently than ever, and to Kennedy the result was more and more to emphasize the fact to him that life without

Diana was altogether incomplete. Diana realized his feeling and knew that before long she must settle it once and for all. She felt she could not go on much longer, seeing them both every day. And she knew now that the man she really wanted was Jim Harvey, but now his newly re-awakened interest in his work had drawn him back again into himself.

Things did come to a head that week at a picnic that Molly Maxwell gave at the Shadra gardens one evening. Neither Jim nor Jean had seen the place before and Molly loved picnics of any description. She gathered Bob Kennedy therefore to complete numbers to her liking, and with well filled tea baskets—Molly's picnics were always notable affairs—took them all out to Shadra.

They explored the gardens and the buildings, listened to the old world tales of the Moghul Kings who had planned them and to the stories of the old royal days from the lips of the aged men who basked in the sun earning their keep as guardians of the place. Bob was the perfect cicerone, he had snatched a half holiday from his work that day on purpose.

And then somehow or other—it was probably Molly's doing—they got separated, and Diana found herself alone with Bob by the old wall beyond the garden's further edge in the stillness of the growing evening.

Once again they slipped out of the present century into an older world, though not of Venice this time, and Diana realized intensely how much

Bob loved her, as he told her all his hopes and all his dreams of what they might make life together.

The world at large thought Kennedy rather reserved; it was a very different Bob who talked with Diana here to-night, and once again she realized to the full all that he meant to her, at least to one side of her. She didn't really know herself what it was that held her back from giving him the answer he asked for, the answer which would have meant so much to him.

Molly Maxwell, packing up the tea baskets, was puzzled and curious when they rejoined her, intensely curious. Both were strangely quiet, and there seemed a certain strained feeling in the atmosphere. Perhaps it was all right though—perhaps she would hear more later. She had rather set her heart on that particular match.

But she was quite wrong in her hopes and Bob was beginning to realize it—he knew to-night that Diana would never be his and he went home with one of the black moods descending upon him which from time to time came down cloudlike, spoiling a world that otherwise he found extremely good. As usual on such occasions he sought forgetfulness in work, and his servants remarked that night that he was working well into the morning hours. Next day he was up at the Rentons' bungalow again but he spent his time in the professor's study making notes of the latest translations with a puckered brow, his brain running firmly on the course he had set it, on the

unravelling of the tangled skein of which chance had given him one loose end to play with.

It was that night when late after dinner Jim picked up the near station once more and sat up a long time making his calculations. He finished them at last and smiled contentedly. Then he got up and began to unpack a very special treasure he had designed, an ultra portable wireless receiving set of the smallest type, to which he could connect his distance and direction detecting instruments. He proposed the following evening to take them out some fifteen miles and by getting a second location from a different point, definitely pin down the sending station.

Di drove him out next afternoon in the Buick. It was the week end and Kit had come over from Ferozepur, so that Jean was not available, but Diana had capable fingers and had learnt a good deal about the instruments. Of late she had more than once replaced Jean as assistant and earned praise in the process.

They set up the apparatus at a quiet corner—the whole thing was considerably smaller than the smallest of portable gramophones—and sat listening in. There was nothing coming through at the beginning and Jim filled his pipe and waited. Meantime it was a pleasant evening of the Punjab cold weather as the days begin to lengthen out towards the spring. Jim watching the bird life in the trees around—natural history was one of his minor hobbies—also contemplated Diana, who was looking perhaps even more attractive than usual,

propped on one shapely elbow holding a receiver to her ear.

Diana looking up caught his thoughtful gaze fixed upon her, and as she offered him the proverbial penny suddenly felt confused. What he was really thinking of was too obvious.

"Worth much more than that, Di," he answered. "I was thinking about you just then."

"Wondering whether I could handle these gadgets as neatly as Jean does," said she lightly.

"No—you do—better in fact, only don't tell her I said so. She fancies herself at gadgets or used to until Kit came into her world. Since then she doesn't think about them when he's anywhere near. No. It wasn't that." He rolled over and sat up. "I was just wondering whether you could put up with a lifetime of gadgets—they bore most women," he concluded rather lamely.

Just then Diana felt that she could put up with several lifetimes of gadgets if they were Jim's gadgets, which obviously was what he really meant. Long ago, ever so long ago, he had walked into her heart and established himself there, even though subsequently he had gone out of her life again without knowing what he had done. Diana was one of those who cling to things that have been dear. The memory of Jim as she had first known him had always been very dear to her, though they had been apart for several years. There was a feeling as though he "belonged" to her as she expressed it, and though Bob Kennedy had come into her life first as a friend and then as something

more, perhaps because Jim had shown no sign, Diana knew now quite well that it was Jim Harvey whom she had always really wanted.

Her voice was not quite steady as she answered.

"It would depend upon the gadgets of course and upon . . . upon their owner."

"Oh, their owner would be rather dull, I expect Di—people who make gadgets are dull or they wouldn't make them," replied Jim in a voice that also was not quite as steady as it usually was. "Someone like me, I expect." And Di knew that behind that lame speech there was a halting question that made her smile a very tender smile. Jim was never good at words.

"I think I could try," she said, and her eyes were not on his that time, and the phone had dropped upon the ground beside her. Gadgets didn't matter just then to Di, nor for that matter to Jim either.

Then she was aware of Jim suddenly much closer—of a Jim who had also apparently lost all interest in gadgets.

"Do you really mean it, Di," he asked rather hoarsely. "I never thought . . . I never thought you could put up with anything so . . . so ordinary. I thought it was Kennedy, only Jean told me. . . ."

"What did Jean tell you," asked Di swiftly, without moving.

"Told me I was a fool—she's always sisterly."

"Dear fool," said Di tenderly. "Dear, dear fool," she repeated, turning her face towards him.

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And so Jim forgot all about gadgets for a space and entered into his kingdom—the kingdom that waits for every man and woman to share when love has opened blind eyes.

It was a long time later—the stars were coming out—when they repacked most carelessly the gadgets which had lain neglected and started the car again, their original quest altogether forgotten in the wonders they had found, wonders much older than wireless, and yet newer than the morning's flower buds.

They were late for dinner, of course—very late indeed, because Jean and Kit were sitting on the verandah when they got back, and Jean who had more than the normal share of women's intuition fled upstairs after Di which made dinner later than ever and Kit presently shared the drawing-room fire with Jim Harvey. The professor, as usual, was in his study still labouring at his researches—unpunctual meals affected him not at all.

Finally Jim's tongue was loosened, and Kit poured him out another sherry and bitters for luck.

"All fortune, old man," said he as he lifted his own glass. "Jean's been waiting for this for a week. Molly Maxwell will be disappointed though, she backed the other horse."

"Poor old Bob!" said Jim. "He hasn't got my luck."

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE

CHAPTER XIV

BOB KENNEDY went home from his office feeling dissatisfied with life. He realized to the full how much he had built on a future whose central feature should be Diana, and now he must rebuild his world without her. Life had completely lost its savour these last two days since Di had told him of her engagement to Jim Harvey. Being a sportsman, Bob had wished them both luck—he was sincere enough in his wishes because he had come to like Jim Harvey in many ways. Nevertheless it was a very hard blow to take, and going home of an evening made it harder still. There was work to occupy him all day, but the evening in his bachelor bungalow, with its many reminders of the plans he had made for the time when Di should be mistress there, was hard to face.

The gods were therefore kind to-night when on his arrival he found Bakshi Ram waiting to see him—there would be work to do to stop him brooding.

Work there was, or at least good promise of it. He realized that very quickly when having changed out of uniform he sat listening to Bakshi Ram's account of his doings this last week.

Disguised with some faded rags, some ashes and paint, Bakshi Ram had disappeared from the world which knew him, his disguise facilitated by his own

caste, for he had wandered, a Hindu ascetic, after the manner of the man who has forsworn the world, begging his way from house to house and village to village, sitting long hours by wayside shrines and talking with all and sundry.

"He is here, sahib," said Bakshi Ram, referring of course to the Saddhu of whom they had spoken so often before. "He is here, and there is something afoot—something of which there will be trouble born unless it be scotched. What it is I know not—that must be discovered. But with him are others who are new to me, several men, not less than five at least. For three nights have I seen them, now one, now another. I considered their paths and so came upon their meeting place which is by the Safed Kothi, the old white house on the Delhi road—the sahib knows it, a half ruined place built in old time.

"Do they live there?" asked Kennedy, thoughtfully sipping his tea. He knew the building, one of the deserted type one finds round old Indian cities, by no means a ruin, for the building was in the solid Moghul style, built possibly upon the site of something more ancient.

"I do not think so," answered Bakshi Ram. "I think they live in various places and meet there by night."

"How do you know that!"

"Sahib, I have watched them—indeed I have spoken with two of them, Hindus those. By their speech I should say two of the others were Mussulmans. Of the fifth I cannot say; he might have

been a foreigner, a Turk or a Persian perchance. But I am certain they will meet again, to-night, because last night I crept near in the darkness and heard them speaking, though of what they talked I could not hear, not being close enough. Later on they passed so close that they could have touched me where I lay between a bush and a wall and I heard one of them say to another, 'At the same time, then, to-morrow'."

"Which means in about three hours time," remarked Kennedy looking at his watch. But as yet there is nothing I can do—we must learn something more."

"That is why I have come here," explained Bakshi Ram. "We must know of what they talk first of all and for that one must overhear. I considered this and it seemed to me that if the sahib himself were to listen the matter would be quickened." He looked at Kennedy hopefully.

"But how?" asked Kennedy.

"How?" echoed Bakshi Ram with a slight smile. "Has it not been done before? Did I not teach the sahib, when he was but new come to this country, the way to move unobserved among the folk, to be whatever he wished, whatever he thought. Has he forgotten those days?"

"No, I remember well enough, Bakshi Ram," said Bob, and for the first time for several days the thought of Di went out of his mind, as his memory harked back to the days when he had amused himself wandering in the bazaars in disguise in company with Bakshi Ram. It was as Bakshi Ram

said, a question of being what you thought yourself, of sinking yourself in your part, a form of hypnotism perhaps, whereby others took you at your own valuation. These had been amusing days, and profitable in what they had taught him of the people among whom he had to work. His superb command of the language had been a great asset, but greater still had been Bakshi Ram's tuition—it was not the words that mattered so much—it was the atmosphere with which you contrived to clothe yourself. Yes. He could do it again; and at the thought his interest in life re-kindled once more.

“Then were it not well to follow the old plan? There is yet an hour of daylight and the sahib drives his own car, which may be left by the roadside in a quiet place with perhaps my wife's brother's son, lest thieves pass by. I do not think we shall be seen, but lest we are and lest speech be necessary, the sahib shall wear the old clothes he has worn before, changing where we leave the motor.”

The thought of adventure filled Kennedy's mind. This was not quite his regular work but it would be a welcome change. There might be nothing in Bakshi Ram's idea, but at the least it would be interesting; anything was better than trying to do paper work in his present frame of mind.

Then he bethought him of something else.

“Wait you here, Bakshi Ram. I have an idea about the Saddhu—something I heard spoken of some days back.”

Ten minutes later he was talking to Molly

Maxwell, and the results of his talk were that he returned to his bungalow with Rupa in the back seat of his car. It was a chance, probably a wild chance, but one worth trying even though it led nowhere. It would be of distinct interest if the Saddhu did prove to be the man whom Rupa had known as a boy. If so there would be good grounds for connecting the Saddhu with the ultra-audible wireless speech recently translated—it would be a point at which to begin unravelling the skein.

The evening was drawing on, the sun had gone and the air was heavy with the smoky haze of a Punjab evening, when, having left the car between some clumps of bushes off the road, Kennedy and Rupa followed Bakshi Ram into the growing darkness towards the old white building whose fishbacked roof they could just see outlined against the darkening sky. Had anyone observed them there was nothing worthy of remark—the Brahmin in his rough cotton clothes, followed by an even shabbier Hindu villager with the tight trousers more or less white and the carelessly tied, stained pink turban. Bringing up the rear was nondescript Rupa who might have been just anything, a wandering goatherd returning from a village fair, or from a day in the city, going home from the main road where the crowded Chevrolet buses plied over the formless Punjab plain.

They passed some older ruins, flat thin Moghul bricks, crumbling into slow decay, and presently came to the overgrown enclosure which two centuries before had been a pleasant garden.

Before them, dim against the now indigo sky, rose up the white building.

From there, on they moved very cautiously in the wake of Bakshi Ram and presently in response to his swift signal lay flat in an old masonry drain. Kennedy felt something move away from under his foot and the white man's dread of snakes came upon him heavily as he lay under the thorny branches. From a few yards to his right he heard in the still silence the low sound of men's voices and then the clink of metal as an iron-shod shoe tapped against a loose stone.

After a long wait Bakshi Ram who was peering out in front signalled back to him, and he crawled forward once more until presently, squeezing through a jagged opening in the stonework, he found himself in a stone-floored room in pitch darkness. Then the Brahmin pressed close to him and whispered into his ear.

"It is the room beyond—there is a slit in the wall—see you there is a light there now. I have told Rupa to stay still and make no noise while you and I move forward and see what may be seen.

Kennedy's eyes, now accustomed to the full darkness, made out the faint yellow smear in the darkness ahead, and moving silently forward he realized that, as Bakshi Ram said, it was indeed a crevice in the wall. Actually it seemed to be a definite small hole made purposely, for the sides were rounded, though what purpose it had served originally he could not tell.

As he reached the wall, the light beyond grew

stronger and he could catch voices. The peep-hole was above his head though and of little use for the sound of voices was indistinct. Feeling round the chamber in which they were, they presently found some loose stones and with the utmost care were able to build up a small platform so that Kennedy could get his face up to the level of the slit.

The hole did not command a full view of the room beyond but it commanded the centre of it, and looking through, to his surprise Bob saw that the room was well lighted with electric lights, small bulbs presumably run off accumulators—there was certainly no power out here so far away from the city.

The room was dome-shaped with fluted pillars and had once been the main room of the building, possibly the living-room which had served for the original owner when he chose to spend a night out here for hunting expeditions—the local story ran that in the old days the buildings formed part of a hunting box.

To-night there was a rich rug on the floor, and immediately opposite to Kennedy stood a small table with upon it a peculiar image of gold and jewels standing perhaps a foot high, obviously of very old design and most peculiar in that the figure was eyeless.

As he watched, a man came into his circle of view and at the first glance he recognized his old acquaintance the Saddhu. Of that there was no doubt at all, Bakshi Ram had been right. The man stood still a moment before Kennedy who was

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able to study his features, the hairless face with the twisted hair upon the head, worked into ropes, the peculiar light-coloured eyes, snake-like in their still gaze, the thin-lipped mouth.

As Bob watched, another man appeared, someone unfamiliar to him but clothed like the Saddhu in the saffron robes of the devotee. They spoke together in Hindi and Kennedy was just able to catch their words.

"The Master will be here to-night," said the Saddhu. "It is long since he has visited the white house. He comes because of the man from the north whom we receive to take the oaths before the image of what will be, of what indeed becomes more each day."

"Yes—the work prospers, Taru," answered the other. "It prospers exceedingly and blindness spreads more and more. Even in our time darkness may come if all goes well."

"And with the darkness the blade and the flame," said the Saddhu. "Thus will the ages bring retribution and the children of men receive the fate which is theirs by right. Then from the darkness shall we," he emphasized the word, "we of the old race come into power, making of them the blind slaves they should be. Yes, blindness creeps over the earth, thanks to the Master who by the secrets of old time and the new powers or those men call new, has woven the net in which like fish they will snare themselves. North and West the blindness grows and grows. It will come in our time, brother—have no doubt. We shall see that

for which those before us have laboured through the ages."

It was not exactly illuminating talk to Kennedy as he stood pressed against the rough stone wall. But it sounded as if there might be more to learn yet—it was well worth coming for. Kennedy could recognize venom in words—he had met it often enough in the course of his work. And a person called "The Master" had been mentioned in the translated messages. But he wondered rather who might be the "children of men" and who the "Old Race."

Then the men ceased talking and stood still as another, before whom they bowed low, entered and also stood well within Kennedy's circle of sight—a strong-faced man of medium height, his head covered by a cap of strange design. Save that the man was clean shaven, there was nothing about him that Kennedy could fix for identification. He was neither fair nor dark, his nose was just an ordinary nose, neither curved nor snub, his eyes were of an indeterminate hue which might be almost any colour in varying lights. At one moment Kennedy thought they were rather vividly green but then as the man turned towards him to speak to the Saddhu he could have sworn they were brown. Of one thing however he felt somehow sure; this man also was a stranger to him.

His clothes were of quaint fashion such as Kennedy could not place at all, and he flattered himself on being able to pick out most castes and tribes in India by the tie of a turban, the knotting

of a grass shoe, a caste mark or a twist of loin cloth. It was a hobby of his with every man he met, to try to guess his race and faith. Of this man he could make nothing. At one time during the evening he thought he was perhaps not an Indian at all, but a man from Thibet or China, a Mongol, there seemed something about the eyes. Then again a turn of the head and the shifting of the light, and he knew that he was wrong, whatever the face was, it was definitely not Mongol.

But that the man was the one referred to as "the Master" seemed clear from the respect with which the others spoke to him. And then suddenly Kennedy realized that they had slipped from Hindi into an unknown speech, and as he listened with a deepening sense of familiarity, he felt certain that the speech was the unknown one which he had heard on those phonograph records taken by Jim Harvey.

The Master and the Saddhu drew back and seated themselves on two cushions placed either side of the image, the Master being seated higher than the Saddhu. Several more men entered the room, though Kennedy could only actually see one of them who with bowed head walked up before the pair by the image and then prostrated himself.

The Master changed his speech, this time to one familiar but unknown to Kennedy, who judged it to be Arabic. The Master was clearly a good linguist. The newcomer rose again to his feet and Kennedy was better able to see his face, a lean face

with the nose of a fanatic and eyes like sunken jewels. On one side of his mouth was a jagged scar. Kennedy thought it would not be possible to disguise that easily.

The Master spoke in his soft voice, very quietly, and yet Kennedy had a sense of inflexible will behind the words. The speaker seemed to be one in the habit of giving orders that were swiftly obeyed. They were so in this instance, for presently the man moved closer and gazed fixedly at a gleaming stone which the Master held before his eyes. Then the Master lifted his hand, making circling motions about his listener's head, and it seemed to Kennedy that with each motion of the hand the man's body swayed in unison. The Saddhu sat still and silent watching with his fathomless stony eyes, until at last in response to some command the scar-faced man straightened himself up and turned sideways so that Kennedy could see his face again. And now the fire had gone from the eyes which were strangely still and lifeless, and the face was as that of a statue.

A movement to one side of the room attracted Bob's attention and he observed two more men who advanced with a brazier of glowing charcoal which they placed before the Master. The Saddhu handed the scar-faced man a short dagger of old pattern which he took, and still with his eyes fixed on those of the Master he placed it in the brazier so that the little red and blue flame licked up the blade, which presently grew lambent red and so by degrees to white hot.

The heat moved upwards until at last the hilt too, which was of dark metal, glowed dully red.

Then suddenly the Master spoke again and at his words the man put out his hand slowly and deliberately, seized the knife in his fist and raised the white hot point, his eyes always on the Master's face. The tone of the Master's voice changed, dropping to a whisper.

The man before him, still gripping the red hot dagger turned suddenly with those blind eyes that now seemed to have no brain behind them and with deliberate steps advanced upon one of the men who had carried in the brazier. His sinewy arm shot out and he seized the other by the throat and the glowing point of the knife darted up and forward, snake-like at the other's bare throat. Suddenly the point checked in mid-air, Kennedy could read the terror in the second man's eyes as he struggled vainly in that powerful grip seeking to pull free.

Undoubtedly the Master had spoken, though Kennedy had caught no single word—the knife had been arrested in the very middle of the blow. Then apparently in obedience to another command the knife dropped upon the carpet whence mounted slowly a little curl of smoke as the glowing metal singed the fringe of the rich carpet.

The man turned to face the Master again and then sank down crouching, his right hand open before him and apparently unharmed by the red-hot metal.

"It is well," said the Master, speaking in Hindi now, presumably for the benefit of some others in

the room whom Kennedy could not see. "He is obedient to the words of power, to the thoughts of power also. He has plucked the blade from the flame and turned the point as he was bidden. Let him be numbered among the lesser servants and let him go forth upon his appointed work to do as presently he will be ordered. Do you, Afzal," Kennedy presumed that Afzal was the second of those who had brought in the brazier, because at the word one of these turned towards the Master and listened more intently, "do you, Afzal, who have trained him, bear in mind the fate of those who fail, of those who fail to obey the words of the Speakers in Silence whom you may never see but who can read your thoughts from afar. Remember that they have power to withdraw the life, to make the offender stand before death as some of you have seen with your own eyes." There was a hushed silence in the room as he spoke, and the Saddhu turned his head with a slow snake-like motion, looking round upon those before him and then back again to the Master whose impassive face had never altered in expression, given no sign of feeling or emotion.

Then there was a movement, of relief perhaps, as the Master lifted up again the gleaming stone—Kennedy could not decide what jewel it was, save only that it glistened in the light, gleamed and shone with strange lights, and was barred with faint shadows—lifted it and held it up before the man's face. The Master spoke no more, at least there was no sound, but his eyes were fixed steadily on

those of the man before him, and it seemed that there was some communication between them. Then the Master made a swift gesture with his hand, and Kennedy saw a change come over that crouching figure as it rose swiftly to its feet and half turned. The face was fully alive again, and now it was the face of a man who wakes from dreams.

The Master spoke, and the man turned and looked towards the eyeless image behind him at which the Saddhu now pointed. Afzal came to his side and stood there as the scar-faced man repeated some formula, and at the conclusion bowed deeply before the Master.

Then slowly he turned and followed by Afzal passed out of Kennedy's sight. Kennedy turned away swiftly and reaching out his hand in the darkness felt for Rupa, signalling him to take his place upon the ~~stones~~ for an instant. He heard the slight intake of breath as Rupa looked into the room beyond and gave him a little while to take in the scene before he signalled to him to give up the place again.

"It is Taru, Sahib," whispered Rupa as he stepped down. "I would know his eyes anywhere. It is Taru, though changed somewhat, but the others I know not at all."

Kennedy smiled to himself as he stepped back. It had been worth while bringing Rupa after all. It was a definite point on which to work. While waiting he had looked at his luminous watch hidden in his clothing, since in his present disguise he

could no longer wear it on his wrist. It was just eleven o'clock. He wondered how much longer the meeting would go on.

As he stepped back he saw the Master rising slowly to his feet, and then suddenly the quiet of the room was disturbed as a man rushed in hurriedly and spoke swiftly to the Saddhu. Kennedy saw the flash in the stony eyes as the Saddhu snapped some word back and then darted from the room. He wondered whether perchance they had been discovered and felt in the folds of his waistcloth for the automatic he carried there. It was no use moving now, however; if they were discovered they must wait. It would be difficult for any man to enter that room without showing against the light of the opening through which they had come.

But it was not their presence which caused the excitement, as he realized when almost at once the Saddhu returned and spoke in the unknown language, and just for once there was a change in the Master's mask-like face, a swift expression of incredulity or doubt seemed to cross it. He spoke no word, but the Saddhu Taru realized the doubt, for the whole tone of his answer was emphatic.

And then Kennedy's observant trained eyes caught something more, something whose value his mind did not register fully till later. The Master as he listened tapped his hand against the little table whereon the image stood, tapped it mechanically and monotonously. Then he swept

from the room and the Saddhu followed him. For a while the place seemed deserted, though once or twice Kennedy thought he heard distant whisper of voices. Then presently the Saddhu and the man who had entered with him in the first instance came back and busied themselves rolling up the rugs and replacing the golden image in a box. They took down the electric bulbs one by one and then as the chamber turned to darkness Kennedy heard their footsteps receding.

It was half an hour later when, hearing nothing more, he led his party away, moving silently out through the opening, crawling round the old wall in the shadow of the bushes. Not till they were at the far corner of the deserted enclosure did they venture to stand up cautiously in the shadow of a tree and look around.

The night was still and there was no sound to be heard. Evidently those whom they had seen had all left. Presently they were back at the car and Kennedy changed swiftly into his ordinary clothes. An hour later he was driving up the Mall towards his bungalow, thinking hard of all he had seen. Only Rupa was with him now. Bakshi Ram had been dropped near the entrance of the city, and disguised as a holy man was plodding his inconspicuous way along narrow alleys into the heart of the crowded city to a house where he had good reason to think he would locate one of the actors whom Kennedy had been watching. Tomorrow evening he was to report to Bob and doubtless thereafter many things would be set in

motion. Bakshi Ram had worked long enough with Kennedy in the old days to know the policeman's moods. That he had set Kennedy on to some big matter there was no doubt whatever—he had read that in Bob's face. Bakshi Ram smiled to himself—there was a chase ahead and he was one of those men found almost everywhere among the better races of the world, to whom the excitement of the chase outweighs entirely any thought of possible reward.

He did not, however, report to Kennedy the following evening, though what prevented him was not in the least clear. At least one part of it was clear—he did not report because dead men cannot tell tales, and Bakshi Ram was quite dead when a passing bullock driver tripped over his body in the dawn near the river bank. Being an ex-soldier the bullock driver did not do as some Indians would—fly in silent terror at the fear of being implicated. He looked the body over and when he reached the bridge where there is a policeman on duty told him about the discovery, commenting with the policeman, a bearded Sikh who hailed from his own part of the country, on the queerness of the times.

It was perhaps three hours later that Kennedy, busy in his office, got the news that one Bakshi Ram, pensioned head constable, had been picked up dead by the bank of the Ravi. Fortunately the constable who had recovered the body had been a recruit under Bakshi Ram and recognized him despite the strange clothes and caste marks. Being a discreet

youth he had not worried about that part but made swift report.

Kennedy dropped his files and hurried down to the police station. The game had indeed begun.

KENNEDY was waiting for Doctor Maxwell, for whom he had telephoned directly on his arrival at the hospital, when the surgeon there had told him that the case was puzzling and he could not understand the cause of Bakshi Ram's death.

Maxwell had hurried down and there had been a post mortem examination. The doctor was deeply interested in the case, which might perhaps connect with that of the man whom they had found two years before dying of some mysterious, untraceable cause, and he had told Kennedy he would come up and see him directly afterwards.

As he waited, Kennedy tried hard to find a solution not only for the cause of death, but for the actual death itself. Possibly Bakshi Ram had been recognized and so killed, but even then why, when presumably the Master and his friends had no knowledge of anyone taking an interest in their actions. To kill policemen, pensioned policemen at that, would serve if anything to attract attention to their movements, hitherto quite free. Kennedy knew the workings of the various undercurrents with which his department was in touch, and he was perfectly certain that this was an entirely new group from the police point of view. Of course it was possible that in other guise, they were also

engaged in some more simple criminal business, and so had somehow or other been in contact with the police elsewhere. Then realizing that a policeman was shadowing them they might have taken the quickest method of shutting his mouth.

His musings were interrupted by the sound of a car outside and a moment later Maxwell entered his room, his face gravely thoughtful.

"What do you make of it?" asked Kennedy, passing over a box of cheroots and indicating the drinks. The doctor looked a little tired.

"Unsatisfactory," answered Maxwell, helping himself absent-mindedly to a cheroot and cutting the end. "Bakshi Ram died of what we all die of in the end, heart failure, the universal cause of death. But what made his heart fail is another story."

He pulled a chair close up to Kennedy's and lighted his cheroot.

"I think we're up against something pretty dangerous, Bob," said he, and as he spoke he looked round the room. "Trevor at the hospital was puzzled like me, very puzzled indeed. In fact probably nineteen men out of twenty would have given it up and said death from natural causes or something like that. Trevor was the twentieth, which was sheer chance. I would probably have given it up except of course I'd heard your story and knew all that we know. The police surgeon made nothing of it and suddenly I thought of Trevor and asked him to come down. Even then

it was only just towards the end that he had a brain wave and went back over the throat once more. He then proceeded to elaborate an almost impossible theory about the use of a particularly rare and poisonous gas—I won't worry about the technical side of it. It's not a war gas because, as far as the experts know, it's perfectly impossible to use. you can't make it safe for the people who want to use it, it's costly and dangerous to prepare, and not always certain in its action. He finally came to the conclusion that if there was any cause that he could certify, that was it. But what puzzled him was how on earth anyone out here could procure such a gas which could only be prepared in the most scientific sort of laboratory. As far as he'd got a theory it was that they caught Bakshi Ram and tied him up—the marks on the wrists indicated that—and then finally given him an extra whiff of the gas."

"What do you mean by finally," asked Kennedy with a grim turn of the lips. "Had they been doing anything to him to make him talk?"

"Nothing like hot irons or anything crude of that sort—you needn't worry about that. Something much more effectual if Trevor is right. The first use of that gas, highly diluted if you could control it, which no one has ever succeeded in doing, is a sort of delirium. That would not necessarily be fatal."

"And the victim then proceeds to talk?" asked Bob.

"Exactly. Whether or not you could keep him

on the subject you wanted would again be a moot point. But if you did. . . .”

“If you did, well, whoever did it might know a lot of things by now, know quite well that we are watching them.”

“Yes. That’s why I think there are going to be rocks ahead.”

The sound of another car made both men look out of the windows and they saw Jim Harvey pulling up in the porch. He came and joined them.

“What brings you here?” asked Kennedy. “You’re just the man we want to see, as a matter of fact.” He gave him a hurried outline of the night’s happenings and the death of Bakshi Ram. Jim whistled at the last bit of information.

“I certainly think they know something is up—at least they do if they are the same people who use the wireless, which on the face of it seems fairly certain. Last night I was listening in after dinner and I heard the wireless going—took two more records which the professor is now translating. But just about eleven they stopped down for a few minutes. Then they opened up again and it struck me as funny because it sounded like a short message repeated several times. Then they went off altogether. I had the phonograph running all the time and when nothing more came through I took that record off and put it aside for Renton to tackle first. He was away last night and didn’t get back until mid-day. Undoubtedly they know they’re being watched, because this was the

message." He produced a piece of paper from his cigarette case and read from the professor's meticulous handwriting :

" ' All—all—all. Master circle speaking—Master circle speaking—Master Circle speaking. Danger—Danger—Danger. Close down until Master Circle speaks.' The last sentence is repeated five times."

"You said about eleven o'clock?" asked Kennedy meditatively.

"As near as I could judge. I didn't happen to look at my watch just then. But I did later when the transmission went off altogether and it was then about a quarter past eleven. Judging by that I should say the first stoppage was about eleven."

"I wonder what put them on to it," reflected Bob. "It was not us at that time because if it had been they could have got both me and Bakshi Ram together. They obviously didn't know we were hidden there." Then he stopped because he saw something in Jim's face, mixed dismay and horror.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I was just wondering whether I could possibly. . . ."

"Could possibly . . . what?"

"Just this. You know how the converter alters the tone pitch up and down according to the way it's set. When it's on if anyone comes into the room I always switch it to neutral position for safety. If you turn it still further on that new switchboard of mine it would go on to transmitting

circuit. Just before that stoppage Jean came in to speak about something and I switched over. If, carelessly, I'd switched over too far our voices would have been toned up and transmitted and they might have heard us and tumbled to it. I switched back the moment she'd gone."

"Anyway, that would hardly bring Bakshi Ram into the picture," said Kennedy, who could see that Jim was connecting a mistake that he perhaps had not even made with the death of Bakshi Ram. But for the rest the coincidence was too exact. He pictured the scene in the room, as he had seen it just about eleven o'clock; the excited man running in, the incredulity in the Master's and Saddhu's faces, their hurried exit, the silence that followed the return of the Saddhu and the removal of everything in the room. It was the most likely theory of all. But as he had said truly it did not connect Bakshi Ram, who in any case knew nothing at all of the wireless experiments and had never seen Jim Harvey.

But if later in the night Bakshi Ram had come into contact with men suddenly aware that their activities were known to others and they had realized who he was, then their action was comprehensible enough. One point of course Kennedy did not have to guide him. He did not know that the floor of the room where they had been hidden was sprinkled with fine dust from the mouldering roof. The colour of the old tiles in that building was distinctive, there was no other like it for many miles. It had been the final undoing of Bakshi

Ram, for a little of it was still on his clothes when he fell into the hands of the Saddhu whose eyes missed nothing.

They were still trying to trace the connection when one of Bob's subordinate inspectors appeared to report on the search of the white house which he had carried out immediately after Kennedy had learnt of Bakshi Ram's death. Kennedy talked to him in his office, while the doctor and Jim sat talking in low tones, until Bob returned.

"They found nothing definite," said Bob. "The place was quite deserted. But I'm running out now myself to have a look, I'd like to inspect more closely. I'd hoped we might find some of them there."

"Come in to dinner and let's talk over the whole thing" said the doctor. "Tell Faiz Ullah to bring your kit over and you can change at my place. You come along too, Harvey."

An hour later Bob Kennedy explored very thoroughly the building where he had hidden the night before. Beside the vaultlike room where he had been and the bigger room where the Master had received the scar-faced man, there were three other smaller rooms from one of which a flight of stone stairs ran down into a deep *tai khana* below, a cellar-like place which went some way underground before it came to a stop. That also had been recently used and used a good deal, there were the print of many feet in the thick dust and Kennedy's men made measurements. At least six different men had been there. The marks of one man

were particularly distinct, distinct in the peculiar formation of the right foot of which the little toe was missing.

Further close examination of the room where he had hidden showed to Kennedy that since he had been there, others had also visited the place. Clear cut and sharp above his own shoe prints were the marks of that foot with the missing toe.

It was nearly dark when Bob left, having discovered nothing more. He arranged for the place to be kept under observation, and then went back to his waiting car and so to the Maxwell's house where he changed. Molly was out for the evening and there were only the three men. Dinner over they gathered in the drawing-room and ran over the various threads which composed the tangle they were trying to unravel.

"Let's tabulate exactly what we have got," said the doctor, "and then see just what we can make of it."

He settled himself more comfortably in his chair and began.

"It all begins with Jim's wireless experiments and that converter of his. The use of the two together enables him to overhear people speaking in an unknown language. The transmission is doubly secret because it is sent out in tone of a pitch inaudible to the human ear. In an effort to find out what the language may be he makes the phonograph records and sends them out here to us who don't know them either. But there is one thing, which is that two years ago, under rather

peculiar circumstances, I came across an unknown language which appeared to be the same and which we have since found to be identical. On a subsequent occasion, I mean the case of the Chinaman who apparently committed suicide by stepping in front of a train, we meet it again.

"We then have Rupa who claims to be able to talk with certain animals, particularly dogs. Jim carries out experiments which on the face of them support Rupa's claim to some form of speech inaudible to us. Whether or not the dog itself can talk, or whether there is some question of thought suggestion in it, is not absolutely definitely established—more experiments are necessary. But Rupa mentions a certain youth he knew who had the gift in a much more marked fashion than himself. He describes the man and now he sees someone who, he is positive, is the identical person—the Saddhu whom he called Taru."

"And," added Bob, "who was addressed last night by his companion by the same name—Taru."

"Somebody you had met before in suspicious circumstances too," put in Jim, and Kennedy nodded. He was very anxious to meet Taru once more. Bakshi Ram had been a friend and a loyal follower, and although so far there was no proof Bob felt certain that the Saddhu had a hand in the business.

"Jim Harvey then tries to locate the various sending stations of which there appear to be several dotted about the world."

"There *are* several," corrected Jim. "That's definite."

"Right. And one of them is somewhere in the vicinity of Lahore, not far from the white house."

"One more reading and I'd have pinned it absolutely definitely," commented Jim.

"The next thing that happens," continued the doctor, "is that Bob gets news of his Saddhu friend in what appears to be suspicious circumstances and manages to attend one of the man's meetings. You can take up the thread now, Kennedy."

"Well, the Saddhu is definite, both Rupa and I recognize him as the same man. With him is someone obviously very important, whom he and others refer to as the Master. Follows some kind of ceremony, hardly religious, although there was the peculiar image. The Master uses several different languages, including one which so far as I could tell was the unknown one you and Renton have now succeeded in learning. His talk, so far as I was able to follow it in the Hindi part, referred to some form of campaign directed against the 'children of men' which seemed, if we take it in conjunction with the translated messages, to mean humanity as a whole. It's clearly a widespread organization to overthrow something or other equally widespread. It's not simply directed against the Indian Government or the British Empire."

"Directed against the human race seems the shortest way of putting it," said Maxwell. "But by whom and for what?"

"Presumably by the Master; we'll come to that

in a minute," answered Bob. "There are two points we've left out. The first is the hypnotic display we saw, which agrees remarkably with what Rupa told us about a mysterious stranger with whom Taru went off, a man who could make men do whatever he wanted."

"And the second?" queried Jim, as the policeman stopped.

"It may of course be nothing, just a coincidence. But when there was the upset towards the end—I think that must have been when they suddenly realized their wireless was being tapped—the Master, who also was excited, it was the only time I saw his expression change, taps in that queer way with his left hand."

"What's that got to do with it?" asked the doctor.

"Don't you see? It connects with Kit Barrington's yarn about his Armenian and the peculiar business of the man they caught who was dead before they could ask him anything. Remember?"

The doctor did remember, with emphasis, as he got up and began to walk up and down the room as he did when thinking hard. Suddenly he turned on Bob.

"You recognize Arabic?"

"Certainly," said Bob. "I don't understand it, of course, but I recognize it when it's spoken."

"That seems to clinch it then. The Master, Kit's Armenian and Rupa's stranger are the same person. He must be fairly good at disguise."

"Not necessarily," objected Bob. "Rupa did

not know him well, and it was a long time ago. Kit knew him as the Armenian and hasn't seen him as the Master. I've only seen him once."

"Yes, that's so," conceded the doctor. "Obviously, however, the Master and the Saddhu are the people we want. They're certainly dangerous, very dangerous indeed. They're remarkably fine scientists, as we know from their wireless and the way Bakshi Ram was killed. There seems no doubt about that."

"None in my mind," said Bob. "They went back to the white house after we'd left, probably after they caught Bakshi Ram by some accident, a lucky one for them. Somehow they discovered that they'd been overheard in the building and went and found the very place we'd used. Possibly poor old Bakshi Ram told them, if as you say he may have been delirious at first."

"And it looks, although it's hard to believe, that they, or anyway one of them, has some strange power of being either able to kill people at a distance or make them kill themselves."

"Hypnotism in a really dangerous form perhaps. I wonder if they can read thoughts as well as the Master's speech seemed to claim," asked Jim thoughtfully

"I don't see why not," said the doctor. "Electricity is the basis of physical life, as I've said so often. Thought is probably an electrical function, some sort of wave impulse. Why should not a specially cultivated brain be able to receive the wave impulses of other brains or,

conversely, impress its own on those accustomed to obey it—weaker instruments? Distance has nothing to do with it. The electric wave has the speed of light.”

“Then why should they waste time and take risks with the wireless,” objected Jim. “Why not run their whole campaign by thought.”

“I said specially cultivated brains. Probably there’s only two or three of them have the power. The rest of their agents have to be communicated with by simpler mechanical methods, although they’ve made them pretty safe with the unknown speech and the ultra audible tones. But I shouldn’t be surprised if part of the method is not also thought impulses. In that way the Master might be able to work on excited crowds. In crowds when men really do not know what they’re doing, one strong mind will sway them just as its owner wants to. It probably is mental and not the actual words—often the crowd, anyway the bulk of it, is too far off to catch the orator’s words. And if it’s mind it doesn’t matter how far away the body is in which the master mind works.”

Kennedy shifted his position a little before he spoke rather hesitatingly.

“I’m a policeman, supposed to deal in hard and fast facts,” said he. “But the line you’re taking now makes me think of my talk with the old man at Khan Bahadur’s tomb. He talked of spirits and powers loosed against men—of coming trouble, as though something evil was passing by disturbing the world.”

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"The Master is certainly here. A chart of world troubles with the movements of the Master superimposed on it might possibly solve the riddle," said the doctor. "That I think is the present problem for us—find the Master—though I don't know how we begin." And they were no further when they finally separated, and Bob drove Jim back to the Renton's bungalow and then went on to his own with his head full of theories, none of which seemed very satisfactory.

He had, of course, circularized descriptions of the Master and the Saddhu and the man with the scarred face. Possibly he might get news of them in a few days. But the Master was an impossible person to describe—he had felt the difficulty when he tried to pin down some salient features on paper—there was just nothing to catch hold of. He couldn't even be sure of the man's height.

Then he turned into his bungalow and as he did so felt his near hind tyre go suddenly flat, and swore accordingly, for he wanted the car early next morning. Normally he would have run the car into the garage without troubling to wake any of the servants except the watchman whom one keeps in India—an honourable system of blackmail whereby lesser thieves may earn an honest living.

He shouted for the sleepy eyed chowkidar who came grasping his bamboo staff of office with which in theory he drove off his brother thieves. The ancient was still blinking from sleep as Bob sent him to wake his orderly to tell him to get the puncture mended the first thing in the morning.

The orderly—he was only a lad—examined the gaping rent which the cast-off bullock shoe had made, and then ran ahead of Kennedy to turn on the light in the hall just inside the door. Kennedy always used that door, Faiz Ullah locked the rest from inside before he went off for the night to his house at the other end of the compound.

As the man opened the door and stepped into the hall only a yard in front of Kennedy, Bob saw a sudden leap of blue sparks and crackling flame. Simultaneously there was a dull thud upon the floor and the verandah light which the chokidar had turned on when Bob's car had driven in went out. Bob leaped forward, wondering what had happened—obviously the lights had fused somehow—and tripped over the body of his orderly.

He shouted for lamps and presently the other servants came running in, Faiz Ullah at their head with a hurricane lantern. By the dim light Kennedy examined the huddled body which lay upon the floor in a twisted attitude.

"He is dead, sahib," said Faiz Ullah as he touched the man's chest. "Quite dead. The kismet of Bakshi Ram's house is surely evil these days."

THERE was no question about the evil kismet of Bakshi Ram's house. His nephew was stone dead even before Kennedy touched his body. Doctor Maxwell, who was round in less than ten minutes after receiving Bob's note—he did not trust the telephone—said that death must have been instantaneous, as one would expect when a man has received the full strength discharge from the main circuit.

Twenty minutes later the sub-overseer from the power house arrived in response to Bob's urgent summons, and after disconnecting the main leads and ripping up the woodwork of the hall line he showed the doctor and the policeman how it had been done.

"You were pretty lucky, Mr. Kennedy," said he. "If that poor fellow hadn't run in before you to turn on the light you'd 'ave been where 'e is. Whoever did it disconnected the light leads and crossed them on to the button. But what puzzles me is 'ow they got the return circuit."

He bent down and touched the Kashmir rug which lay in the hall, then ran his hands over it carefully. A sudden glint of comprehension came into his eyes.

"It's damp," he said, pulling up a corner of the rug. "They damped it to make better contact. That there's the extra lead they 'ad to get in, 'idden under the rug and taken off the wall. But where does that one go." As he spoke he was feeling over the rug with his hands. Then suddenly he pulled out his knife and made a cut or two in the material. The knife grated on wire.

"They've changed the rug perhaps. There's a copper wire grille worked into the hembroidery. See that, doctor?"

The doctor saw clearly; looking closely now with an electric torch here and there the naked copper wires glinted in the yellow and red wool work of the rug.

"I should have taken it for the original rug," said Kennedy, "but it's a common enough pattern. You could buy twenty in Lahore to-morrow that would match it sufficiently well to pass if one did not look closely. That wire would have taken several hours to weave in like that. They probably brought it ready and only had the lead connections to make here. But who and when?"

He turned to Faiz Ullah and asked if anyone had been seen about the house during the evening.

"Only the electrical man who came to mend the lamp in the dining room," said Faiz Ullah, and Kennedy remembered that he had given orders for that to be done the day before.

He turned quickly to the overseer, asking him to find out immediately who had been sent for the work, and the overseer spoke over the 'phone, rather a

long and puzzled conversation it sounded. He turned to Kennedy at last.

"Very queer, sir. It was Ram Singh, one of my best men. 'E was told to come round this evening, 'e had several other jobs to do. The power 'ouse say two or three people 'ave been ringing them up this evening, complaining that no one's been round. Ram Singh 'asn't shown up again this evening neither."

"Had him long?" asked Kennedy, as he offered the overseer a cigarette and then lit one himself, thinking furiously the while.

"Ever since I came to Lahore, sir." The overseer mopped his forehead with a gaudy handkerchief and looked more puzzled than ever. "'E's a good man, Ram Singh," he maintained. "Some of these coves is rotters, but I've always 'ad good work from Ram Singh—when a Sikh is good, 'e's very good."

"Who was the man who came?" asked Kennedy, turning on Faiz Ullah. "A Sikh."

"No," answered Faiz Ullah. "He was a Mohammedan."

"Then where the devil is Ram Singh," interjected the overseer in alarm. "I wouldn't like to think of anything 'appening to 'im."

It seemed extremely likely that something might have happened, thought Kennedy, as he gave the overseer a drink and impressed upon him that he was to say nothing to anyone until such time as Bob told him he might. For the moment the whole affair was an unfortunate accident due to a wire

having come adrift owing to the servants' criminal foolishness in trying to repair a switch themselves—possibly the orderly himself had been to blame—cleaning his master's car had born a desire to be a mechanic in him, and when that happens to the Indian the betting on heavy trouble is a safe win.

"There's no doubt they were looking for you, Bob," said the doctor when they were alone. The servants had carried the orderly's body away and some of his friends had been sent for from the police lines to take charge.

"That's obvious," agreed Kennedy. "They're a dangerous lot in the speed with which they hit. There's going to be some fun before we get to the end of them. But we're going to do it." The firm chin advanced a little more aggressively. "As often as not I'm rather sorry for the men I round up—there's generally a lot to be said on both sides. But when I catch the Master and his friends, there won't be any sorrow in this child. Murderous swine!"

Then as an afterthought: "I wonder if they've disposed of Ram Singh. And how the devil did they find out he was coming here?"

However, Ram Singh was found next morning alive and angry. His solid head was very sore where an iron-bound lathi had fallen on it, and his joints were very stiff as happens when a man lies out through the night in a damp drain straightly bound and gagged.

All he could say was that taking a short cut to

Kennedy's bungalow through an overgrown bit of waste land near the power house, he had met a beggar, a cripple. Being charitable he had stopped to extract a copper pice from his waist cloth where he carried his money. At that moment the cripple suddenly recovered the use of his withered legs and snatched Ram Singh by the ankles. Simultaneously something descended violently on the back of his head. The next thing he remembered was finding himself stripped of his clothes and trussed like a fowl, lying on his back, unable to move hand or foot. And there he had remained till morning when some goatherds happened upon him and released him. His story was quite unshakeable—his character was well known.

"They make damnably sure," said Kennedy. "The electrician was going to be fitted out completely with his pass and other marks. They need hardly have taken all that trouble, because there's been one or two minor thefts by so-called electricians coming in to do repairs when the coast was clear. Indian servants are pretty simple. I'm surprised at Faiz Ullah leaving him alone though."

He tackled Faiz Ullah on the matter with some heat and then paid a further tribute to the thoroughness of his opponents. Faiz Ullah had indeed remained watching the electrician in the dining-room. The man had disconnected one or two wires outside first and when his work was finished was going to replace them. Just then there was an uproar outside and Faiz Ullah was called.

Faiz Ullah kept three goats, most dear to his heart—good milch goats. They grazed at large in Kennedy's compound and the mali hated them because sometimes they trespassed upon the flower beds.

Faiz Ullah could hardly be blamed therefore when in the heat of the moment, seeing one of his precious animals being hunted by two large dogs, he had seized a lathi and rushed out to the rescue. Kennedy felt sure that the owner of the dogs, who had retired amid a shower of picturesque curses and some danger from the lathis of Faiz Ullah and the orderly, had been in the matter. According to Faiz Ullah, he was a Pathan, one of the many who come down into the Punjab during the winter for work and occasionally for such opportunities as may fall in the way of the honest gentleman of the road. But the Pathan kit might have been a disguise.

Kennedy decided that undoubtedly the Master was a brain of the very thorough order. That made the game all the more exciting, of course, but clearly something must be done quickly. Unfortunately all of them had disappeared as if the earth no longer held them. No sign of the Saddhu had been found—Kennedy had never felt hopeful about the Master; it seemed impossible to describe him accurately enough. The man with the scarred mouth and the Saddhu must be caught first.

He felt happier when next evening a telegram from the Delhi Police reported having arrested a man on the train who seemed to correspond with

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one of the descriptions, and in the morning, after the train came in from the south, and two constables marched in a man in irons, Kennedy felt still more contented. There was no mistaking the face even without the scar.

But getting hold of the man was one matter, getting information from him quite another. To begin with he seemed to speak no known language, and only when Kennedy eventually secured an Arabic interpreter in the shape of Kit Barrington, for whom he wired to Ferozepur, did the man's face light up. He conversed fluently with Kit, telling him a long story of misfortune which began at Basrah and ended at Peshawar. He had come over with a horse dealer who was bringing over Arab ponies, and after some time in Bombay had taken it into his head to wander northward, where he had spent such money as he had and was now going south again when the railway police most unwarrantably arrested him in Delhi.

His story was as circumstantial as the Eastern can make it, he had the name and details of the stables in Bombay, and there was nothing for it but to make enquiries in Bombay. He had passed through Lahore, yes, but he had never stayed there except for those few hours waiting for a train. Two men from the tea stall in Lahore station confirmed that—they recognized the man—had sold tea to him they said. Kennedy, knowing for certain the the man was lying, cursed solidly under his breath. He felt sure that Bombay could produce all that was required in the way of recognitions,

which in the course of time it did, unwillingly, because the suave Arab horse dealer who had once employed Raht Ullah had no further interest in him and no wish to waste his time attending before magistrates. But he had certainly brought him from Basrah with his ponies—had employed him for three months in Bombay—and had no complaint against him. He was a quiet if lazy worker who gave no trouble of any sort. Possibly he drugged but that is not a crime.

Kennedy began to feel rather hopeless about this string. The prisoner stuck to his story—and although he remained in custody temporarily, Kennedy felt that unless something more definite was forthcoming presently, they might have to let him go again.

The white house had been searched thoroughly and nothing more was found. It seemed entirely deserted, and Kennedy began to wonder whether perhaps it had only been used just for that one occasion, although somehow he felt that that was not the case.

“I’m sure they used it a lot,” said Jim Harvey one evening as they were talking over it. “My plottings for that station were all on that side and the last two were within a mile of the place. The very last night—the time they sent out that danger signal—the reading I got pin-pricked out almost on the house itself.”

“They’re not likely to come back again now,” said Kennedy. “They must know we connect them with Bakshi Ram’s murder. They do know

it or they wouldn't have tried to get me. I wonder though. . . ."

He broke off and sat silent evidently pondering something.

"Wonder what," said Jim at last.

"Well, whether I couldn't work a bluff on rather more scientific lines than the policeman is conventionally credited with following. Suppose I was to give up the white house and run another scent—a fake one. I could rig one up all right. They might think it was safe again."

"And then . . . ?"

"Then if the white house is useful to them they'd come back."

"And you'd round them up ?"

"No. I want to get something more first this time to make sure. Wouldn't it be possible to install a few microphones in the place, that baby type of yours ? Put them in really well hidden and have leads out to some place where we could overhear. Could you do that without anyone being likely to spot them ?"

"Easily," agreed Jim. "It might be worth trying. I've always wondered why the police don't do more of that. The Hun always did it in prisoner's camps and embassies and places where they wanted to overhear. They got a lot of information that way and so did we when we'd taken up the idea. I had to do some of it towards the end. You get a couple of prisoners together who think they're quite alone and they'll talk hard, fellows whom you'd never catch with 'pigeons' or

the more simple kind of traps. If you and I were put together in a Hun lock-up for days on end we'd certainly talk, sooner or later."

"It's worth trying," said Kennedy. "At least I think so. We can go down together and pretend we're making a final search of the place. You fix up the microphones and then the next day I shall get important evidence showing me that we've been on the wrong trail altogether and I'll kick myself and everybody else who ever had anything to do with the white house."

Jim spent a very happy morning over that business—it was quite like old times when he had put in a month's rest at a prison camp installing microphones, and thereby certain most valuable information had reached the higher command. He wondered how much this little net of his in the white house would bring. But neither he nor Kennedy felt too sanguine because they knew how thorough the Master was.

"I wonder if it will work," remarked Kennedy, as he watched Jim fixing the last wires. "The obvious interpretation must be that we're pulling his leg with a new clue. I'm banking, therefore, that since we've found first his inaudible speech and secondly his language—he realizes that now all right I should say—he'll give us credit for being pretty cunning too, and argue that if we really wanted him to come back to the white house we'd have a much cleverer scheme. Therefore we're on the straight this time and not bluffing. If he argues like that he may come back. It seems

the only chance at the moment. Bakshi Ram was the only fellow who'd ever been in close touch with the Saddhu and they've killed him. There's Rupa, of course, but Rupa's no use. I can't send him to look for the Saddhu. He'd be much too obvious, he'd always be himself. And of course he'd have no idea of how to set to work, and as likely as not would get into trouble."

Kennedy's plan was well laid. Even his best assistants believed him when he sent them out looking for a man whom he'd coined out of his own imaginative head. He gave them most detailed descriptions. His enthusiastic young assistant Smith even was not enlightened, and spent many hours wading through reports from up and down the country reporting someone more or less like Kennedy's mythical assassin. The way in which the news got out through a most lamentable indiscretion was even more skilfully stage-managed. Kennedy felt as certain as he could be that by now the enemy must know that the police were off on some side line which actually had nothing to do with the case. Kennedy hoped that the Master would be patting himself on the back and congratulating himself on the foolishness of his opponents.

His final coup was the release of the man with the scarred mouth, a bold stroke and one over which he rather hesitated. But that also was well handled. So far as he could judge the scarred-faced man left the police custody quite convinced that he was being released because it was now definitely

established that on the night of Bakshi Ram's death, the scarred-faced one had not been in Lahore in company with a certain hitherto unlocated person, a Bengali who was clearly the author of the crime. Kennedy's description of the Bengali was a masterpiece. Anybody who knew the Master as Kennedy had seen him would be quite certain that Kennedy was describing the Master. The man with the scarred face was quite sure of that. Twelve hours later the news reached the Master by certain speedy secret channels and the Master also smiled. A Bengali was one of the few disguises he had never adopted, and Bengali one of the more important languages he did not know.

Thereafter for a short space Kennedy rested from his labours, and chiefly under the pressure of Molly Maxwell returned once again to the social world from which he had more or less vanished since Di had definitely accepted Jim Harvey.

He never knew how long it would be before the Master struck again—it might be any day or night. Kennedy felt sure he would strike again soon. But that was not going to prevent Bob from leading his own normal life. Other people had also tried to remove him upon occasion, and some of them now languished in prison and others had been duly and properly hanged for their crimes. The Master would follow in due course. Such was Bob's philosophical view of the business.

Meantime March was well in, the Lahore season

would soon be drawing to an end, when the women would fade away to the hill stations and Kennedy and his male friends be left once more to the tender mercies of sandstorms and grilling days and nights.

Molly Maxwell decreed the theatre—there was a visiting company in Lahore at the moment. She still felt a little sore about the Jim-Diana business, although she was much too fond of Diana to say so, and she had really begun to like Jim for himself. But Bob had been her favourite for a very long time. Now she must look round again and see what might be done among the various eligible damsels she knew. Bob Kennedy as a bachelor was, in Molly's opinion, entirely wasted.

So for a time she managed to cast a light-hearted glamour over their circle which when it stopped to think had enough to make it very thoughtful. Both her husband and Professor Renton knew well enough that chance had taken them out of their hitherto rather uneventful lives and flung them into contact with something much more violent. Kennedy, who was no alarmist, had spoken to them plainly on that point. Although at the moment everything seemed quite peaceful, there was danger lurking in the shadows. At the moment Bakshi Ram's death had faded into one of those unexplained crimes which are by no means infrequent. His nephew's death was still regarded as an accident by the outside world, the bluff honest overseer at the power house had been as good as his word in that respect, though it irked him to think of un-

merited blame for carelessness falling upon his own department.

Jim, in spite of the glamour of the early part of an engagement, continued with his researches, rendered the more interesting now by Di's continual presence—she had adopted the gadgets wholeheartedly. Possibly under the approaching prospects of matrimony, although he had really very ample private means, he began to flirt a little with the idea of commercializing some of his inventions. He listened with more attention the next time he met Mathias who, mopping his brow and reiterating the delightful prospects of England in April—he hoped to be back in Sussex by then—nevertheless talked with distinct interest to the young man, as he still called him to Renton and Molly Maxwell. Mathias always clung firmly to the business man's motto of "recognizing brains." In Jim Harvey's case he certainly did, and he had been looking for brains of that type for some time, for they are not common. Of course, he did not commit himself too soon, your financier never does, but there was more than a prospect of a Mathias-Harvey combination appearing in the near future.

As for the Saddhu, the Master, and the others of the mysterious circle, they apparently had ceased to exist, and the wireless now being dumb, the professor had no further records to translate. He now spent his evenings going over the old ones with Maxwell, listening to the doctor's outlines of the great thesis he was engaged upon, based on this strange language. It would finally and irrevocably

prove that, as the doctor had always maintained, speech was not a distinction between man and animal, but the last incontrovertible proof of their blood relationship.

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE CHAPTER XVII

"It's good to be out in the open country again," remarked Jim to Doctor Maxwell the following Sunday. "Lahore has been getting a trifle on my nerves ever since that attempt on Kennedy."

The doctor who was busy putting his gun together agreed. He was not a man of nerves but of late he had been finding the atmosphere of Lahore somewhat depressing, and was grateful for the opportunity of getting out for a day. Molly was really responsible for it, for although she had made little reference to the trouble which brooded over them, she realized to the full what her men kind must be feeling. Kit having come over from Ferozepur for a week's duty in connection with some examination such as the post war Army has made a habit of, she had taken the opportunity to organize a day after black partridge, and the party's cars at the moment were drawn up along the side of the Multan road some twenty-five miles out of Lahore.

Jean and Di were there, needless to say, Di armed with her twenty-bore and Jean, who did not shoot, dressed in workmanlike kit for walking with the guns. Around the cars were gathered a small crowd of local men to act as beaters under the leadership of Maxwell's shikari. Rupa and Bup of course were present, and Kit Barrington's tall

Sikh orderly lent distinction to the scene in the way that the Indian soldier affects on such occasions.

Leaving Molly, who did not care for tramping all day in the sun, to proceed with the lunch baskets to a pleasant clump of trees by which the wheel of an old Persian well creaked monotonously and dreamily, the remainder set out across the fields where in the distance from time to time the defiant cheerful note of partridge calling offered prospect of good sport.

Considering the season was drawing to its end the sport was good, distinctly good, and by the time they rejoined Molly about one o'clock the game sticks were reasonably well laden with a mixed bag of grey and black partridge, snipe, a late duck or two and a couple of hares.

They cast themselves down in the welcome shade of the big trees by the side of the rippling little channel that carried the water from the Persian well to the fields about and the small boy who superintended the bullock on its monotonous round, driving the well wheel, sat absorbed in the much more interesting spectacle of Molly's lunch arrangements. He marvelled at this absurd habit of the European of packing food—much food—into baskets and carrying it many miles to eat in the middle of nowhere—a lunatic dinner, as the Indian idiom is for the European picnic.

The beer was cool and good, the lunch was one of Molly's best, which is saying a good deal, and at its conclusion there was a distinct aversion on

the part of the guns to return to the real business of the day, the capture of food in natural fashion. The slightly strained atmosphere which had grown in Lahore this last fortnight fell away from them as the talk turned more and more to lighter matters, and Jim was content to see the slight shadows disappear from Diana's eyes. She knew that whatever danger threatened must threaten him as much as Kennedy and the others, more perhaps since after all he was the man who had first got on to the track of this mystery. She wished greatly that the knowledge he had was shared with others and then perhaps the danger would be minimized. But to-day she had managed to chase away the haunting fears that had obsessed her, and as she lay in the shade of the trees listening to Jean's laughter and Kit's cheerful talk, like the rest of the party she almost contrived to forget that intangible danger hung about them.

"Well, I suppose we must," remarked the doctor despondently at last, sitting up and reaching for his gun. "This is about the last shoot of the season and we want to make as big a bag as we can. Kennedy will be sick when we get back, to think what he's missed to-day." He got to his feet and with somewhat reluctant sighs the rest followed his example.

Once afoot, however, they recovered their keenness and when after half an hour's walking they suddenly got into a patch of cover that yielded a most notable covey of birds they felt that it was more than worth it despite the sun which was

beginning to get some of its summer power back, just a hint of what it would do in another month.

The doctor, having fired the last cartridge in his pocket, turned to the man who carried his cartridge bag to fill his pockets again and realized how many cartridges he had expended for he had to break into a new consignment of recently purchased No. 7's. It was certainly a very good day.

As he reloaded he heard the beaters shouting, heard firing on his right and threw up his gun for a swift right and left at two black partridges which passed almost over his head. As he fired the second barrel he suspected that all was not well and when sitting up again, conscious of a shoulder that might have been kicked by a cart horse and a cut and bleeding left hand, he realized that something was very ill. He gripped his wrist with practised hand and shouted for Jim, the gun on his right.

"What on earth happened?" asked Jim, as he did his best with a handkerchief.

"I don't know," muttered Maxwell—the hand hurt infernally.

"Barrel's burst horrid," commented Kit who had also arrived from the other end of the line. He picked up the gun, an expensive weapon by one of the best of London gunsmiths, and was contemplating the torn metal of the barrel. A gun by a less good maker might have spelt a very different story. Then he turned the weapon round and looked down the barrels. Nasty accidents have occurred before now when, in struggling through

jheels, mud has choked a muzzle. But the muzzles had no mud upon them.

It took him ten minutes hard work before, with his orderly's aid, he managed to take the gun down and knock out the remains of the fired case. He compared it with another and then dropped it into his pocket for future reference and turned out the doctor's cartridge bag.

"I think we'd better stop now," said he at last and his voice was rather grave. He was not an explosive expert but he felt convinced that that cartridge had been loaded with something entirely different from the regulation charge of nitro powder which the others should hold. Such carelessness does not occur in the manufactory of the well known ammunition makers whose mark was on the green cases.

But Kit did not say much more about it until they got home that evening and the doctor, who was feeling rather shaken, was safely in bed, with Molly fussing about him, while his friend Trevor was cleaning up the swollen, distorted hand. Kit meanwhile was sitting in Jim's room at the Renton's bungalow. On the table before them lay the pile of cartridges taken from the doctor's pockets and cartridge bag and they were slitting them open methodically. Three split cases had been put aside in an empty box.

Jim split open the last of the cartridges and discarded it into the box at his feet. Then he looked at Kit.

"Five out of fifty," he remarked. "They're

very thorough. But how the devil did they do it? Maxwell bought those cartridges at the usual shop in sealed packets. They must have been substituted afterwards. Question, by whom? Rupa looks after the doctor's guns and shikar gear, so you can rule that out. The coolie who carried the bag? That seems unlikely."

"Maxwell's been damned lucky," commented Kit "I believe that cartridge was less heavily loaded than these others here—they're none of them quite the same. But if I'm any judge this one," he indicated one of the four in the box, "this one would have taken his hand off and sent most of the breech straight back into his face."

"I don't think we'll talk about this much for the moment," said Jim, and Kit nodded. "Wait till we've seen Bob about it. No need to frighten the women more than we can help. I wonder who's turn it is next time?"

"Yours or mine perhaps," answered Kit shrugging his shoulders. "I wish to God there was something tangible about it all though. There's nothing to get hold of. They seem to know all about everything by the way they're hitting now. I wish we could find some trace of the Master. I'm sure I should recognize him if I saw him, if by any chance he's my Armenian friend. I've got a first class memory for faces. Hulloo, there's Mathias' car—looking for you, I suppose."

It was dark now but there was no mistaking

Mathias' car, the purr of the powerful engine, and the note of the horn.

"I expect he's made up his mind about that proposition I was telling you of," said Jim as he got up. "I thought he'd bite at it; he's a shrewd old thing. It's Di's fault; I used to think I had as much money as I wanted but just now I'd like to make some more."

As Jim had guessed, Mathias had come about that very matter. Jim found him downstairs with the professor talking over Maxwell's accident. He apologized for coming round that evening, but he was leaving next day for Delhi and as he would be away for several days was anxious to get a few more details before he went.

Jim took him upstairs to the workshop and showed him the instruments, and although Mathias was obviously not a mechanical expert he displayed considerable commercial shrewdness regarding cost of production and possibilities of mass work to cheapen prices.

"There's money in it, Harvey," he said at last. "But you've got to get the patents before we go any further. It would be fatal to do anything until we're secure." He lapsed into technicalities of patent law which he seemed to know well.

Then he turned back once more to the commercial aspect and as it was getting late Jim drove back with him to his house on the Mall, a furnished house he had rented from a business man who had gone home.

They sat talking over the proposed agreements

until it was time for Mathias to depart for the station to catch the night mail south. Neither of them noticed a furtive shadow which slipped away from the window as they came out into the glare of the electric light Mathias had switched on in the verandah—the shadow of a man who had been crouching there for the half hour or so during which they had been talking over their drinks.

Two days later an incident occurred which may or may not have borne upon subsequent happenings. It was commonplace enough in itself—the visit of a snake charmer, complete with his peculiar musical instruments, his round baskets containing some sleepy cobras, probably fangless, his rather moth-eaten mongoose with the dirty string about its neck. Neither Jim nor Jean had ever seen a snake charmer before and were full of interest in the display, watching the hooded snakes writhing sinuously to the "slow wailing of the charmer's pipes.

Jim came in presently and there was nearly a fracas owing to his puppy Tim, a half-bred retriever, son of Mica by an unknown but evidently sturdy father, a small dog full of spirit. He conceived the mongoose to be his natural enemy and made one clumsy dive for it. The situation was only saved by Jim's hurried grab at Tim's collar and the equally hurried snatch at the mongoose string made by the dull-faced, beady-eyed, dark-skinned man who assisted the snake charmer. The mongoose sat up spitting with fury, and its master began to return his precious cobras

to their baskets. Jim with difficulty controlled the struggling puppy.

The display continued a little longer, chiefly for Jean's edification—she owned a camera and was making a book of what she called Types—the snake charmer seemed to be suitable for her collection with his impassive face, dark glinting eyes, and the quaint double pipe hung from his gaunt neck.

It was possibly association of ideas that went to make up Jim's subconscious dreams that night—he had all the white man's instinctive dislike of snakes. Somehow the snakes and the Master got mixed in the dreams and he woke several times with a feeling as though something—he was not sure whether it was an immense cobra about thirty feet long or a veiled mysterious figure—was hovering about him.

But the last time he woke it seemed as if there was something rather more definite, and instead of trying to sleep again he lay still, looking across the darkened room to the faintly lit square of the door. Was that shadow beyond it also imagination—it seemed to be that of a listening man? He looked again but the shadow was quite motionless and he told himself not to be a fool—

Then suddenly he half sat up, quietly feeling under his pillow for his electric torch, for the switch of the light was some little way off. The movement disturbed Tim, who in spite of many warnings to the contrary had once more emphasized his independence of spirit by crawling up to the

comfort and sociability of master's bed. The puppy, like most of his age, slept heavily.

Then Jim listened again intently for it seemed to him that he had caught the faintest noise outside as he sat looking towards the door. The shadow had moved, of that there was no doubt, and as he realized it he heard once more the noise that had attracted his attention—the slightest creaking of the door handle. He sat bolt upright feeling for the pistol which of late had been his nightly companion and wondering if it would be there. He had heard queer tales of the uncanny skill with which oriental thieves can take things from sleeping men, even their very bedclothes, without waking them. But the pistol was there and as the shadow moved again his fingers closed comfortably round the butt.

Almost simultaneously the shadow disappeared and Jim was about to leap from the bed when suddenly the puppy woke up fully and with a little growling noise leaped from the bed. The sound of its landing on the mat was followed by one shrill yelp and a flurry—the yelp of an animal in intense pain. With the thought of snakes in his head Jim switched on the torch, surprise of the thief was out of the question now, and in the small circle of light saw Tim standing stiffly on the mat glaring apparently at his master's slippers. As Jim watched, the dog suddenly collapsed as if it had been shot.

Something moved in the circle of light, something whitish that whipped its tail in fury. Jim leaned

down cautiously, picked up a slipper and brought it down with a crash on the body of a largish white scorpion. Then still in his bare feet, for the scorpion had been on one slipper, he ran across the room, thrust on a pair of shoes and opened the door. There was no sound to be heard, no movement to be seen. Before him the lawn seemed deserted and there was no cover for a man to hide. He decided he must have been dreaming as he hurried back to the room to attend to the puppy. When he picked up the limp form he realized that Tim was stone dead.

Jim considered swiftly. Scorpions he knew to be poisonous, but he had never heard of their being so poisonous as to be able to kill even a dog instantaneously. Deaths of children in feeble health have been recorded, but Tim was not in the least feeble—he was the strongest puppy Jim had ever owned. Puzzled he looked at his slipper where the unpleasant remains of the scorpion made a pulpy mess on the red leather. Looking round the room for a receptacle he selected an empty cigarette tin and picking up the slipper tried to slide the debris of the scorpion into it. Then he realized that only part of it moved, and looking more closely saw that the back of the round body was attached to the slipper by the finest of threads. If Tim had not so opportunely jumped down, doubtless actually on to the scorpion, he himself would have put his foot straight into that slipper.

He looked at his watch and saw it was close on four o'clock and not relishing the idea of spending

the rest of the night alone, he pulled on his dressing gown and made his way quietly to the room Kit Barrington occupied. He woke Kit with little trouble and the two men went back to Jim's room.

"Damned queer business," said Kit at last, after he had inspected the slipper, the crushed pieces of the scorpion and the body of Tim. "Something very fishy about it. It seems an ordinary kind of scorpion—bit bigger than most. But scorpions don't kill people, and it was hardly worth while anyone taking the risk of getting into your room by night merely to tie a scorpion on to your slipper. Somebody must have come in, because you were wearing those slippers when you went to bed and the scorpion has definitely been tied on to the left one—they've driven a needle through the leather for the thread."

Neither of them slept any more for the rest of that night. When dawn came they went out and searched the garden. Then just where a pathway crossed between two flowerbeds Kit bent down and studied the ground—something had caught his quick eye.

"The same mark as Bob found in the white house," he said as he rose up. "See, a foot without a little toe. You weren't dreaming last night when you watched that shadow. Pity you didn't shoot quick."

"Might have been anybody," said Jim excusing himself, and Kit had to admit one could not shoot at every shadow round the house.

Ten minutes later Kit, arrayed still in a choice kimona, a cigarette in his cheerful mouth, pulled Bob Kennedy out of bed with his story and Kennedy sat up alert and keen eyed. Twenty minutes afterwards he was up at the Renton's bungalow studying the footprints.

The chowkidar protested violently that he had been awake all night—was he not a poor man and the father of numerous offspring—how should he sleep when thieves might come at any moment.

"He'd have been asleep anyway," commented Kit, "but even if he wasn't it's perfectly easy for anyone to come in one side when he's round the other."

There was nothing else to be found save a thread caught in a splinter on the door—a gaudy red thread that might have belonged to anything. It was only Jean's quick feminine eyes which made her insist that she was sure it was the identical colour of the ragged turbans worn by the snake charmers who had been there the previous day.

Having exhausted those possibilities, the three men considered the remains of the scorpion, which was very much like any other scorpion. It would be worth examining of course, a scorpion sufficiently venomous to kill a large and healthy half bred retriever puppy six months old was, to say the least of it, a freak. Kennedy was just dropping the fragments back into the cigarette tin when he stopped. He picked up the crushed tail and looked at it.

"Give me a magnifying glass," said he suddenly.

There were plenty of such articles in Professor Renton's study and one was forthcoming quickly. Bob Kennedy silently studied the sting-armed tail. At last he dropped it gingerly back into the tin and asked Kit to run him straight down to Doctor Trevor's bungalow.

"He's rather keen on snakes and poisons and things of that sort," was all he vouchsafed at the moment. "I think this is not an ordinary scorpion."

Such also was the opinion of Doctor Trevor, whom they found about to go out riding—the one break in his busy days—he maintained that an hour's horse exercise daily was worth more than all the drugs he prescribed for his many patients. But after a few hurried words Bob induced him to abandon the ride.

"You're right," said he, after he had examined the tail. "It's quite an extraordinary scorpion. Presumably it's the same lot. I told Renton they were the most scientifically dangerous crowd after I suspected that gas business over that Brahmin fellow of yours—Bakshi Ram wasn't it? Look at this!" With a pair of the finest forceps and the thinnest of hooked needles he worked at the tail joint a minute and then, like a tiny glove, the skin of the joint seemed to slip off carrying the sting with it. He put it under a powerful magnifying glass.

"You see—it's devilish clever. They cut off the original sting joint at the end of the tail and then

slipped this one over the next joint of the tail. It must have been ticklish work. You see," he turned back the skin and showed the little pocket inside it leading up to the sting, a delicate affair like the finest of hypodermic needles. "There are still some drops of fluid in there. From what you say of the puppy I wouldn't like to get any of that into a cut."

It was another hour before he pronounced finally.

"A poison of the scorpion type but intensely concentrated and infinitely more powerful than the natural article. I wonder why they thought of doing it that way though?"

"Obvious isn't it," said Bob. "Having been stung Jim would certainly crush the scorpion straight off and thereby destroy any evidence. Even if he didn't actually put his foot on the tail joint what would have happened. You say it would have been slower with him than the puppy. He'd have shouted out probably and someone would have come. They'd have tried ammonia and the usual things. Inside of a few minutes they'd have realized he was dying. In the confusion no one would have thought of collecting the bits of the scorpion. The doctor would have had to have a post mortem before they found out what killed him."

"And then they might not have," commented Trevor. "The only peculiarity would be his dying. Such symptoms as they would find would tally with those of a normal scorpion sting."

"What happens now?" said Kit as he drove Bob back to his bungalow.

"We've got to get hold of the Saddhu or the Master mighty quick," answered the policeman. "We've had luck three times—my show, Maxwell's gun, this business. It can't hold for ever. If we don't get them they get us. We don't keep it to ourselves any more, it's too risky. Renton's got to get his language details off to some other people before the week's out. He'd better make the fact public too—have a newspaper stunt about his discovery. That ought to save him and Maxwell anyway, once he realizes that they are not the only two who know the language, the Master will probably leave them alone and start a new code. Similarly, Jim must stop the secrecy about his converter set."

"He's done that already. He's told Mathias about it with the idea of floating a company and commercializing it—though I don't quite see the value."

"Not for general use," agreed Bob. "But a lot of governments would pay heavily for it. I expect that's what Mathias is after. They'll offer it to Government for official use. But Mathias is hardly enough. If the Master finds out he'll get Mathias too. They ought to take it straight off to whatever market they're selling it in."

Then Bob was silent for a minute before he turned round to Kit with a very grave face.

"There's one other thing too. I don't want to be alarmist. But the girls understand something

of the outfit, don't they? I know Miss Harvey did, and now apparently Diana has been learning. The Master seems to know such a lot—he probably knows that too.”

“Good God!” ejaculated Kit with a sudden horror in his eyes. “I never thought of that possibility.”

“I'm afraid we've got to reckon with it now,” said Bob, as they turned into his bungalow. “If you could wangle a bit of extra leave just now it would be a good thing. The curse of it is we don't know what to look out for, but the more of us there are the better.”

“I'd give all my squadron leave and picket them round the house if I thought it was any good,” snapped Kit. “But it's all in the dark.”

By that evening, after a hurried dash to Ferozepur—Jean went with him—and a short conversation with his colonel, Kit had secured leave on urgent private affairs. Moreover two sturdy troopers of his own squadron, with Mica the retriever and Rags the bull terrier rode in the back seat of the car. If the Master or anyone else tried to reach Jean's room they would tumble over quite a lot of things on the way there. But even that was poor consolation to Kit when he thought of the light switch and the scorpion.

On his return he found Bob Kennedy in earnest talk with Jim and the professor. They agreed that secrecy was no longer any use. The professor, much against his will, was induced to put all his and Renton's discoveries down on paper—they

would take him three days' hard work. The editor of the local paper was to be approached and asked to publish a leading notice of the wonderful discovery of an unknown language—the world was quiet at the moment and fresh copy of the scoop type would be acceptable enough.

THE SPEAKERS IN SILENCE CHAPTER XVIII

THE following afternoon Jim was sitting at home in his workshop busy with drafts of his inventions. Much as he disliked the idea of letting other people into his secrets until they were completely protected he felt that it was the only safe thing to do in the circumstances. The Speakers in Silence were so nebulous and yet so dangerous, the more dangerous in fact for being apparently impossible to locate, that the only hope seemed to be in widening the area at which they must strike.

Downstairs the professor was engaged in his study, drawing up a meticulous account of the new language; several copies of it were to be sent off that mail to various other professors in India and Europe. Like Jim, Renton also felt annoyed at having to give out his discoveries half baked as he put it, and there was an obstinate set to his chin as he wrote.

Kit and the girls had gone out for the day—Kit could see that the strain was telling on them and since the rest of the household were engaged had suggested a picnic day on the Sutlej canal. The dogs also had gone with them and he had borrowed Rupa from the doctor. Since Rupa knew the Saddhu he might be a valuable person to have with one in the possibility of their meeting

that worthy. That had meant bringing Bup also, so the big car was well laden.

Jim heard a car enter the compound and presently caught Mathias' voice downstairs and called to him to come up to his workroom. He wished sometimes that Mathias had a mechanical mind like his own—despite his shrewdness in many other matters the financier seemed to find machinery rather hard to grasp, especially the complicated pieces of Jim's making in which he was going to invest some of his capital.

As he studied the drafts which Jim had made, asking periodical questions all of which dealt in the main with cost, Jim gave him the gist of the conversation with Kennedy the day before and Mr. Mathias dropped the drafts and listened keenly. But he was obviously not lacking in courage—the threat of danger, from some rather intangible source apparently served only to strengthen his determination to go through with the project. But he looked somewhat disturbed when Jim told him of the incident of the scorpion and agreed that it was imperative to get the knowledge into other hands as soon as possible.

"You've no idea of who the criminals are?" he asked at last, and Jim had to confess that barring the one occasion when Bob Kennedy had seen the Saddhu, whom they suspected of being one of the main figures, they had little to go on. Mathias asked for a description of the Saddhu and Jim gave it as best he could, wondering why Mathias should be so insistent.

"I'll tell you why. An incident that occurred yesterday. I didn't think much of it at first but what you say now makes it look very different. Last night when I got back home from my trip, as I was going to bed I thought I heard a noise outside my room. I'd just switched the light out and so I suppose the fellow didn't see me at first when I looked through the door. I saw a man standing there in the shadow and called. There was no answer so I switched on the light again to see. I saw the fellow quite clearly for the fraction of a second and then he moved away. I didn't recognize him as belonging to the bungalow but I'm not good at recognizing Indians—they all look the same to me. I shouted for the chowkidar and asked him if he'd seen anyone about and he said no, only the new gardener whom my butler had engaged while I was away. I suppose I was a fool but I took this to be the gardener and thought no more about it. But from what you say now it might be worth while to make some enquiries. If they're so keen to get you out of the way and by any chance they knew that I was in touch with you they might try to get at me or anyway to spy on me."

A little later Mathias left, promising to come round either in the evening or the next day and settle what action they were to take about offering the inventions to Government.

Jim did not think much further about Mathias' story—it did not seem likely that the Master would connect Mathias with him sufficiently to worry

for the moment. Had Mathias been an engineer of course that would have altered things.

But two hours later he changed his mind considerably when a very flustered Mathias drove in again evidently suffering from a good deal of suppressed excitement.

"I've been a fool, Harvey," he said, mopping his forehead with his handkerchief. "There was something in that man last night after all. I drove home and asked the butler about the new gardener whom he'd engaged and saw the man. As I say I'm not over good at remembering Indian's faces, but I'll swear the present Mali is not the man I saw last night. He's much shorter to begin with. That worried me a little but of course there was nothing very definite.

"Then something else happened. I took the car out for a drive—she's been overhauled while I was away and I wanted to try her on the open road—so I went out some little way. Unfortunately we had a puncture, rather a bad one, and had to change the wheel. While my driver was doing that I thought I'd stretch my legs a bit. The place we'd stopped was by those old buildings on the grand trunk road, perhaps you know the place."

Jim nodded, and Mathias realized that he was keenly interested.

"Do you suspect anything over there," he asked quickly.

"Yes," said Jim. "It's possible. What happened?"

"Well, I walked towards the building and

almost tripped over a nigger who was hiding in some bushes. When he saw me he ran away but I felt somehow certain that he was the fellow I saw last night and so I ran after him." Mathias smiled apologetically.

"I'm not exactly of the athletic age or build and I did not catch him up or see his face again. But from the glimpse I got of him I felt certain it was the same man—something peculiar about the eyes—rather lighter coloured than most natives. He disappeared round the far corner of the red ruined building—you know there are two there, about three quarters of a mile from the white one.

"I was rather hot and breathless and I gave it up then—thought I'd come back and talk it over here. Possibly Kennedy might be able to round up the fellow and see what he's doing. On the way back to the car I happened to notice something lying on the ground over which I'd been running."

Mathias felt in his pocket and produced a little bag fastened with a leather thong.

"I thought perhaps the fellow might have dropped it and so I picked it up. It didn't seem to have anything worth having in it though, a dirty little bottle, one of those tabloid medicine bottles with a few drops of some rather dirty looking fluid in it, some bits of dirty paper with native writing on it and that's all."

Mathias handed over the bag to Jim before he continued again rather apologetically.

"I may be a fool and making mountains out of molehills. But what you said this afternoon

I*

rather disturbed me after that business last night, and I suppose I was ready to see all sorts of dangerous criminals in the most harmless people. Possibly the fellow was nothing more than an ordinary thief or a poacher, if they have poachers in this country, and seeing me, ran away."

"I think we'll ask Kennedy to come over all the same," said Jim. "He's probably just about back from office now."

Jim thought there were too many coincidences for the matter to be dismissed as lightly as Mathias fancied it might be. The ruins were the place in which Kennedy had watched the Master and the Saddhu. They were, moreover, so far as he had been able to ascertain, the very place where the secret wireless had been. The Master had found out so much of all their doings that he would be certain to know that Jim had seen Mathias several times during the last fortnight. It was quite likely therefore that he had set a spy on him. Mathias by sheerest chance had subsequently stumbled on the spy and the man had run away, possibly thinking he had been recognized.

Jim felt certain that if the man had had the sense to stay still and answer any question Mathias put in his extremely lame Hindustani, Mathias would have thought no more about it.

Kennedy was not at home but eventually Jim got through to his office and speaking very guardedly gave him an idea of the suspicion. Possibly the Saddhu had returned and was once more using the ruins.

Kennedy wasted no time but came straight up to the Renton's bungalow and questioned Mathias closely about what he had seen. While they were talking Doctor Maxwell appeared, his arm in a sling, so that the story had to be told for a third time, and during the telling Kennedy, who had been studying the papers in the dirty little bag, silently pointed to the dirtiest. On it was the rough drawing of a scorpion and some figures.

"Let me see the outfit," said the doctor at last.

He examined it carefully, most particularly the small dirty bottle with its few drops of gummy fluid.

"Di's cat's kittens arrived?" he asked at last.

"Yes," said Jim. "This morning, six of them. Di's drowning four; the father must have been the worst kind of wild cat. Why?"

"Because I should like one of them now quickly. Also a needle. No. I'm not mad, I think we're in luck."

A wondering servant presently produced a rat-like kitten taken at some trouble from the mother. When he left the room the doctor dipped the needle into the bottom of the bottle and just pricked the kitten once. The effect was instantaneous, the tiny body quivered and stiffened rigidly without even a sound.

"I thought so," said Maxwell, looking round on his audience. "Trevor was telling me about that scorpion sting. I think Mathias has been lucky. The fellow might have had a blowpipe and some darts—in which case you wouldn't be here."

Mathias burst forth into the wrathful indignation of the financial magnate when actual violent crime is thrust upon his ken. Then remembering that the police were present in the person of Kennedy he restrained himself. He had no great opinion of policemen and soldiers and such like people whom mentally he classed on the same footing as the night watchman at his office. But he was always polite and he was genuinely anxious for them to meet the Saddhu and the Master. They were evidently much too dangerous to be at large.

"Poison enough to kill us all," he snorted, and the doctor, although not admitting that, admitted that even the few drops in the bottle would have been enough to kill him anyway.

"That just about clinches it," commented Jim, as under the doctor's directions he packed up the bottle and the needle—they might be wanted as evidence later. "The red herring seems to have worked—they've come back to the ruins. I wonder whether there's something we haven't found."

"They're probably going on the old sailor's principle of putting your head in a shot hole for safety," commented Mathias. "You say you searched the place thoroughly and so they think you won't be looking there again."

The staccato note of a motor bicycle interrupted the conversation as one of Kennedy's Indian subordinates swung in at the drive.

"Hulloa, there's Ahmad Khan," said Kennedy,

and hurried outside. Within five minutes the motor bicycle had departed again and Kennedy came back.

"You're all right," said he. "They are there. Your microphones were a brain wave, Jim."

Mathias looked questioningly around and Kennedy explained how Jim and he had installed microphones carefully hidden in the white house with continual listeners. Mr. Mathias beamed approval, he had not expected anything so up to date from a government department. But naturally he gave the credit to Jim.

"There are two of them talking. Ahmad Khan himself went to listen. Part of the talk was in the strange language but most of it was in Hindi. He thinks one of them is the Saddhu but he can't be sure. Apparently they have still got the wireless there, they were talking about it being hidden. I wonder if we missed something in those searches."

"What are you going to do" asked Jim.

"Round them up this time. We can't take any more risks. I'll wait another hour for it to get dark. Ahmad Khan's gone back to get a dozen men in a lorry and they'll be waiting for us near the white house. Are you coming, Jim?"

"Rather. I want to interview the gentleman who put that scorpion here." Jim's face was grim as he went upstairs to change into inconspicuous shikar clothes and to gather up a well oiled automatic pistol and a nasty looking trench dagger. He hoped that the Master would be violent—somehow he felt certain that the Master had been his

visitor that night—Kennedy said that the Saddhu had all his toes.

“I’d like to come too,” put in Mathias. “I feel a personal interest in the matter now after finding the fellow and that bottle. I’m glad I didn’t open it, by Jove—I’ve got a scratched finger.”

An extra car of the size of Mathias’ Rolls would be useful even if plump Mr. Mathias himself was no particular addition to the party. But it is only fair to say that he displayed quite a youthful enthusiasm in the adventure when presently they drove out, picking up two of Kennedy’s men on the way. Doctor Maxwell, whose damaged hand made him useless, remained disconsolately with Professor Renton to assist him with notes on the language. The assistance was somewhat disturbed by Maxwell’s periodical outburst against sundry German professors who were now to be let into the great find far sooner than they ought to have been; let in at a stage when they might still be able to argue wordily instead of being utterly crushed by a mass of nicely balanced arguments, facts, and above all theories.

Meantime Ahmad Khan, the sub-inspector, a capable officer with the much coveted police medal, had gathered a party of his men and approached the white house by another route. He was one of the very few whom Kennedy had kept in touch with the whole business from the outset. He had had a considerable share in the laying of the red herring which had evidently been such a success.

It was dusk when they arrived and the sub-

inspector concealed his men and sent the lorry away. A little later he heard approaching cars and was presently in conversation with Kennedy as they outlined their plan of action. In the dim light they could make out the faint outline of the white house, somewhere in which would be hidden the men they wanted. A mile away and quite invisible now rose up the red ruins. Mathias had seen the man whom he suspected near the red ruins but Kennedy felt sure that the real hiding place was the white house and that was the place to tackle first.

Mathias' car was parked by some bushes and Kennedy's own car sent back with his orderly to join the lorry. Then they waited for full darkness before approaching the white house.

The night was very still and rather hazy. In the distance from time to time could be heard the noise of the motor buses on another road and the distant gleam of headlights in the mist showed now and then. But there was no traffic across this piece of waste land.

A little way from the remainder of the party Ahmad Khan and a head constable crouched under an overhanging bush, busy with a telephone and a length of wire. The carefully hidden wire from the microphones in the white house passed that way and the sub-inspector had cut in on the circuit. The usual listeners were still on duty but by short circuiting in this way any news could come in quicker. Thanks to the microphones Ahmad Khan could hear the sound of men's voices in the building

although not intelligible. Then suddenly they got more distinct and by degrees he was able to catch what they said. He listened carefully for some time and then putting down the phone he ran over to where Kennedy was just marshalling his party.

"Sahib—they know we're coming," said he hurriedly. "I don't know how, but it is clear from their talk. They said something about escaping quickly by the red ruins, by a passage."

Kennedy snapped out some orders and the bulk of his party disappeared at a run. Two minutes later Jim and Mathias heard the sound of the lorry moving along the road.

"We ought to have thought of that," said Kennedy. "My fault, I'm afraid. It explains why Mathias saw that fellow by the red ruins and not here. There's obviously a passage between the two buildings. But I think we have them all right. It'll take them ten minutes at least even if they've started now. Our party will be there under seven." He turned round and spoke to the three constables still with him and issued some orders.

"Come along now," he said turning back to Jim and Mathias. "We'll go in this end and do ferret while Ahmad Khan blocks the other entrance. Have your pistol handy, Jim—we may have to shoot quick."

Moving very quietly they approached the white house which was entirely unlit and silent. Guided by Kennedy they made their way into the central room. There they stopped and listened carefully but there was no sound to be heard.

"You stay here Mathias, with the constable," said Bob, and there was no disputing with him. He was very clearly in command and Mathias seated himself at the entrance, balancing the golf club he had borrowed from the professor's house across his knees. He said he thought he would be more likely to hit a man with that than with the pistol which the doctor had offered him. Anyway he would be less dangerous to his own side.

"We'll lead with the two constables behind us," said Bob. "Got your torch ready? Don't put on a light unless I do though."

Jim nodded and Mathias and the remaining constable watched them move downward out of the faint grey light into the darkness.

THERE was no sound and no sign of light as Bob Kennedy, followed by Jim and the two constables, made his way down the old stone steps into the cellars which they had explored before, and where Jim had installed the microphones which had given them the news that the men they wanted were here. Kennedy switched on his torch in the shadow of a corner and felt a thrill as, sharp-marked on the dusty floor, he saw the prints of naked feet of which one, it was a right foot, lacked the little toe. The quarry was undoubtedly here or had been comparatively recently.

Then he switched off the torch again and listened, for from in front he caught the faintest noise of movement. With his pistol ready for instant use he moved cautiously forward; he had a wonderful memory for places where he had once been and a catlike faculty for seeing in the dark.

Presently the stone wall swung round to the right and he knew that he had reached the last of the cellars and stayed still again listening for sound of movement or even of breathing. But now there was only uncanny stillness. Possibly on the further side of the room the enemy were waiting—more probably they were now well on their way towards the red ruins where they would run into Ahmad Khan and his constables waiting for them.

With a sudden motion Bob switched on his torch again and his pistol came up in line with it as he circled the beam around the cellar and then understood. On the far side the corner of one of the stones of the floor projected slightly upward. Bob went straight over and saw that the stone was a trap door which for some reason had not been fully closed. This obviously was the route which the enemy had taken. Then as they pulled and heaved at the heavy flag he realized why it gaped open—a fortunate accident for him, for the stone fitted closely and would have been impossible to detect had it been fully closed.

"They pulled it down behind them and that wood caught in it," said he to Jim, pointing to a small crushed piece of wood at one corner which had prevented the stone swinging back flush into its bed. "I expect the noise I heard was when they were trying to close it properly. Then probably they heard us coming and bolted."

The stone swung up again under their united efforts and they plunged still further downward into a stone-lined passage in which, although it was clearly very old, the air was fresh. Here again on the dusty floor showed recent footprints and once again, near the wall, Bob was able to distinguish the print of a four-toed foot.

"I hope there isn't a side bolt hole," remarked Jim, as he followed the passage using his torch now frequently.

"Hardly likely to be, I think," answered Kennedy. "This probably goes straight to the red ruins."

See that," he indicated an insulated wire running along the wall. "Probably a telephone between the two. Possibly the blighters were here all the time we were doing the search. Did you notice the way in which that stone was backed with wood to prevent it ringing hollow—newish work I should say."

Then suddenly he lifted his hand for silence. Clear from the passage before them came the fluttering whisper of men's voices.

"We've got 'em," he whispered excitedly as he leapt forward again round the bend of the passage in front.

Suddenly Jim was aware for one brief instant of a slight noise close by and then the darkness was illuminated by a flash in mid-air and instinctively he ducked expecting to hear the splatter of lead on stone. But no bullets came; only the air was suddenly full of a sweet, rather aromatic scent—his eyes tingled and then burnt and he felt a choking sensation in his throat. He saw Kennedy suddenly collapse and then his knees gave under him, and feeling as if a giant hand was compressing his chest as a man might crush a fly, with a choked cry he sank down into black darkness.

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It seemed many ages afterwards that consciousness returned in wave after wave of dull pain. As his head cleared a little he realized that he was no longer in darkness but in a well lit room, and turning his head with some difficulty he looked around

him. He realized that Bob Kennedy was also there, sitting beside him, strangely green in the face, his eyelids fluttering and his breath heavy and irregular.

Trying to turn round Jim became aware of a sense of constriction and then looking down understood that the painful feeling in his arms was due to the tight ropes which bound him to a stone bench. Beside him, huddled upon the floor, were the limp bodies of the two constables, both clearly dead—there was no mistaking the dark stains upon the dusty floor nor the look of the still, wide-eyed faces.

Turning his head towards the better lighted portion of the stone-arched room he saw two men watching him closely—men whom he did not know at all. They were seated by a table on which were some small instruments, one of which he recognized as a converter mouthpiece similar to that which Renton had sent him from Lahore. Running along the walls were various wires and in one corner some batteries, possibly the source of the electric current lighting the room.

“The Saddhu !” Kennedy was evidently fully conscious now, and his low whisper only just carried to Jim’s ears. But he could feel Kennedy’s quiet efforts—useless ones—to slip his hands from the ropes that bound them.

The Saddhu it was, as the policeman had now realized. There before him sat the man he had followed for so long. The inscrutable stone-like eyes gazed steadily and impassively upon the pair of bound men, and there was the trace of a smile

on the thin mouth at Kennedy's fruitless efforts. Then suddenly he spoke in English with a slight American drawl which struck Jim as oddly queer, here in this underground vault in the middle of Northern India.

"I am glad you have recovered—you were slow coming round—the gas capsule must have burst very close. The trap was neatly baited and by the time your friend Mr. Mathias brings the police here you will have gone to join those two foolish fellows on the floor there. It will take your men a long time to find the trap-door which is now closed properly and not left ajar as it was for you. No, it is really no use struggling like that because the ropes are very firm."

"What do you propose to do about it, Taru?" remarked Kennedy nonchalantly, still working his wrists to and fro behind his back. "You'll hang in the end, of course, but at the moment you score this trick. As a matter of interest, personal interest, what are you going to do?"

"That is for the Master to say, but I know he has made up his mind. He wants to carry out a little experiment first and then you will go underground where you sit. The stone below you turns—it is a clever device, probably for the amusement of the man who first built this place. Do you hear that water running?" He held up his hand and in the silence they could hear the faint whisper of running water somewhere in the wall. "If that water is turned from its course into another channel it presently turns the stone. The well below you

is deep and dry—there are a lot of old bones there. The designer had an ingenious mind because he arranged that as the water fills the counterpoise it changes its note to a weird one, well calculated to impress itself on a waiting man.”

Suddenly the Saddhu rose to his feet as did the man beside him and they bowed before someone who entered. Kennedy recognized the dress and the puzzling face he had seen once before in the room above. It was unmistakably the Master.

“So—you can listen all right, I see. That is good. I have much to say to you and not too much time. What fool idea did you get in your thick head that you try to catch me—the Master. You, Harvey, with your microphones! Almost I laugh when I hear that. It was too good—I use them too—I use yours—my men they tell you of the secret passage which does not exist. But by now your policemen they will be running in the dark after some men I have sent to the red house—maybe they will catch them too, men who do not know me, men who know none of us, petty thieves. Fools!” He finished with a flow of swift German as he sat down and contemplated the pair before him.

Kennedy stared at the Master wondering. It had not occurred to him that the Master was a European, although even now it was by no means certain. Of Taru's nationality he had no doubt and yet he had just listened to him talking fluent English, but then there are many Orientals who can do that.

"I gather you propose to dispose of us fairly soon," answered Kennedy. "I'm sorry, as I would like to have attended your hanging which now someone else will have to supervise. Meantime just to gratify my personal curiosity before turning on the water perhaps you would tell us exactly who you are. I shall not be able to add that last bit of information to all the rest which I have sent up to Government, so you are quite safe. It will take them another fortnight probably to find out what you tell me now."

That was pure bluff, but Kennedy said it with a good face. It might have impressed another but the Master smiled coolly as he answered, this time in fluent French, without a trace of accent.

"My friend—surely after all I have shown you, you don't insult me by thinking me child enough to believe that. What you have sent up to Government!—are there not convenient waste paper baskets enough in your own office? As for finding out the rest of what you have not discovered—yes, what you have not found out—neither a fortnight nor twenty years will do that. As a man of intellect myself I recognize the quality elsewhere even if in infinitely less quantities. You have a well earned reputation in your department—Kennedy, he is the man, they all say that. I pay you the compliment of assuring you that when you are gone no other will find out even half of what you have achieved, little as that may be." He made a polite gesture of derision, Gallic in its every movement. Then he continued.

"The Master—you know my title if not my name. The Master here to-day and gone to-morrow. What is he? An Indian? Ask of it in the villages, ask of it in the cities. Surely an Indian. Maybe a Brahmin, maybe a Hindu of lesser caste, maybe even a wandering charmer of snakes."

He dropped from French into the perfect dialect of the snake charmer, and despite his predicament Kennedy could not help feeling admiration for an artist in his own line. Disguise seemed quite unnecessary, the man changed as he sat there without alteration of clothes or make up. Jim gasped as under his very eye the snake charmer whose mongoose Tim had tried to kill came into being. Then in a second the snake charmer was gone and in his place was a Mohammedan, a man of the north, a quick-witted city artizan.

"Would the Government perhaps seek the Master as an electrician in Lahore power house, one who repairs faults in wiring bungalows." Accent and idiom were beyond reproach and somehow Kennedy, despite himself, could almost see the clothes change as he watched, the rich robes give place to the shabby working garments of the modern Indian mechanic. He fought against, it for he felt somehow that it was hypnotism.

The Master saw it and smiled again as he switched to perfect English.

"No. Just that I cannot do. Only to those who accept me can I command thoughts as I commanded those of whom shall we say?—of

Raht Ullah?—a convenient tool, Raht Ullah, who thinks me Arab and looks up to me as a sword of his faith. Elsewhere I might be Turk or Persian or even Jew. All things to all men.” He rolled off a sonorous Arabic phrase.

The expression on his face changed a little and now there was hate smouldering behind the expressionless eyes as he continued.

“All things to all fools! That is the more correct way to put the phrase. Fools! Blind fools! And soon they will be blinder yet and then they will learn who rules them. We—we whom before history began men displaced from the place that is truly ours. It is the fashion now, especially among you of the West, to seek for knowledge, old knowledge. Once there was a time when you talked of a world four thousand years old—of Adam and his descendants. Now, equally unwise, you talk of ape men and of unwritten history whose pages are of tens of thousands of years. Yet the older school were the more correct in their childish talk. There are hidden truths in that book of yours, hidden truths in the Moslem’s faith which he does not in the least understand.

“Lillith may be a fable, but the strife between the Sons of God and the Daughters of men is no fable save only in the naming. The older race of beings that man displaced existed, exists still in small numbers, working always for revenge. And now the time draws near and I, the greatest of the lost race shall see it dawn.”

Some strange power seemed to flow from the Master as he talked, something that held Jim and Bob silent.

“Man who is but a changed ape capable of little but ape mimicry took our place. Presently he shall return to his own and be but the brute animal once again. For this have we laboured through uncounted ages and now we shall reap the reward, when in silence, unknown, we shall rule the world and mould it and man to our liking.

“You would ask how?” Neither of them had spoken but the Master seemed to enjoy this opportunity of speech. “Some faint little you have already guessed as I know, realized that we work in many guises, by many roads, in one place as Imperialists, in another as revolutionaries, in one corner as religious fanatics,” there was a new bitterness and scorn in his voice as he spoke of religion, “elsewhere as materialists. We stir the peoples as the wind sways the cornfields that lie ready for the scythe. We hold the powers of our race, of reading thought, of mastery of mind, by which the servants who for various reasons serve us to their own undoing become more perfect than any you can dream of. We sway the minds of mobs, of unthinking mobs whom it is now the fashion to placate, for that also have we worked. In crises we turn their desires now this way now that, more and more does our power grow. Presently it will be absolute and with war and revolution and famine widespread we—the Speakers in Silence—will drive man back to what he should

be, on the plane of the beast whence he will never rise again.

"And you two fools thought to have solved our secrets when in truth you had but stumbled upon the outer fringe. Wiser for you, Harvey, to have contented yourself with the futile money-bringing toys which your race and age delight in. You might have passed many years more in peace. Wiser for you, Kennedy, if your brain had not left the routine paths of your profession, if you had stuck to your last, what the world calls crime, as if in fact there were any such thing. In truth you are but the servant of those who have, to guard them from those who have not."

"Or of both against certain poisonous snakes such as you," corrected Kennedy, but the Master ignored him.

"One thing, however, you did though, purely by chance. In seeking to find out the force against you, you blundered direct against the very brain of it—against me, in fact. Such a blow would be fatal to our organization. I cannot compliment myself on having, in seizing you, secured the brain of the forces against which we are pitted, but I am certain that I shall render those forces once more as blind as they were before, blind and ignorant and naked to my thrust."

He stopped a minute watching the men before him who sat silent, their eyes on his face. Kennedy, in whom the keenness of his curiosity had overcome any fear of the immediate future—indeed, when certainty as to the future arrives, doubt and worry

often disappear since the inevitable is the inevitable—was puzzling as to who the Master could be. He was a wizard at disguise, of that there was no question. Kennedy and the others must have seen him half a dozen times it seemed and had no inkling. But who was he? Had Kennedy himself met him somewhere, could he perhaps be the Armenian of whom Kit Barrington had talked? That seemed highly probable, his linguistic ability was a trait one would associate with a man of the Middle East.

Jim was thinking not of himself but of the others. This man seemed to know so much, he wondered how much more he knew. Then as the Master spoke again he realized how full indeed was his knowledge.

“You and you only found the secret of our wireless which has to serve me with less skilled members who have not the powers that the greatest of us have of transmitting thought as pure thought. Even then there was the guard of our old tongue which I thought none knew but ourselves—indeed none did. There chance helped you again in throwing you with your friends Professor Renton and Doctor Maxwell. I have arranged for them also. To-night when they are waiting for your return they will be disposed of, and in the process the whole of the papers about the language, your drafts and instruments and models, Harvey, will be taken. Those who know something else of the secret will follow them.”

Bob Kennedy gritted his teeth at the thought of

Di, and Jim's thoughts flew to her and to his sister.

"Remains only your commercial friend, Mr. Mathias." There was a smile on the Master's clean-shaven face as he mentioned that name. "Doubtless he is not quick at understanding mechanical matters though he was to have been your partner in a commercial undertaking."

Bob looked at the Master. He wondered where Mathias was and hoped by now that he would have sufficient sense to send the constable or go himself to the red house and recall the police. He had no idea of what the time was, his hands were bound behind him. It might have been half an hour, it might have been half a night, since he had fallen unconscious in the passage.

"But there will be no need for him to disappear no matter how much he knows. Indeed I will call him here." The Master rose to his feet and swept off the robe and there before them he changed even as they watched. *The Master was Mathias himself.*

The wonder of it was that he seemed to have done nothing. His face was the same and yet it was different. Both men were clean shaven, both of the same colourless colour of hair and eyes, of unremarkable features. It was the expression that seemed to do it, that or something behind it. Gone was the sense of power that lurked in the Master's face, before them now Mr. Mathias smiled in the bland pleasant fashion that they had seen so often. They gasped.

"Surprising," crooned Mathias. "You are privileged to see real art, unlike disguise as you know it, a matter of false hair and paint and artificially made-up features. Here is the genuine article as it should always be. The Master is not Mathias disguised—he is the Master and Mathias is Mathias, as he is a snake charmer or electrician or a hundred other rôles you do not know of."

He was the Master again as he swung back the robes so oddly incongruous after the glimpse they had had of his more conventional dress. It was the Master again who faced them now.

"Personality, change of personality—that is the secret, the lost secret of my race and of our power."

"Thus, you see, Mathias need not disappear. On the contrary he returns and warns the police, he helps. By his aid to-night in time the police will find . . . what he intends them to find."

He ceased and looked at his victims dispassionately.

The lingering hope that Mathias might somehow realize their plight and bring help had hitherto still lingered in both men's minds, though knowing how thorough their mysterious opponents were they had built little on it ever since they recovered consciousness. It faded and died now as they stared at the man before them.

"Is there anything more you would care to hear before we leave," remarked the Master pleasantly. "Time draws on and Mathias must go back to his proper place. I think you have perhaps half an hour to live at the outside, maybe much less.

I might have disposed of you as we did of the constables who came with you but there were one or two things I wished to know. The action of that gas is, as you learnt from Maxwell, a peculiar one, since it causes a loosening of the controls, and under its influence men talk most of what they would most hide in waking moments. For that it was necessary to keep you a while. I learnt much during those few minutes from both of you. Having done that I felt impelled to keep you a little longer—as an artist one likes an audience and I wanted the pleasure of seeing you, Kennedy, appreciate my efforts, since you also have some slight inkling of the secret of disguise—indeed in some ways you might have made an apt pupil.

“Why I do not dispose of you instantaneously as I might do is that you will serve me for a small experiment I wish to make with regard to certain powers. Hypnotic powers, as you seem to understand, are normally restricted in their action to those individuals who surrender their will—I do not, of course, talk of crowd hypnotism, which is an easier matter. But I have a theory that in certain circumstances the individual inhibition may break down, in cases for instance where men in powerless condition await extinction as you do. It will be an interesting experiment and I shall be able to judge the result later.”

He rose to his feet and spoke to the Saddhu in the unknown language.

Taru and the second man approached the two prisoners and examined their bonds again, twisting

the two sideways so that they sat back to back. They added some knots to the ropes at their feet. Then they extinguished all the lights except a single bulb focussed immediately above the face of one of the dead constables so that the only illuminated point in the room was that dead face frozen into horror, probably from the action of the gas.

The Saddhu then went to an alcove on the further side of the room and they heard a slight grating sound followed by the gurgle of water in a new channel close behind them. He returned and with the assistance of the other gagged the two men.

"I do not fear that any might hear you," remarked Mathias as he watched. "But for the purpose of my little experiment I would prefer that you should not be distracted by any noise except that of the moving water. I do not wish you to talk to each other."

He cast a look around the room, signed to the Saddhu to move the table slightly, twisted the bulb of the light a fraction and then passed out of the door followed by his two satellites. The Saddhu alone lingered an instant, smiling quietly but very evilly into the face of Kennedy before he left. His English was not quite so perfect as it had been as he murmured a few words into which he compressed the vivid hate he felt for one who in his eyes stood as representative of all he sought to destroy.

As their footsteps died away in the passage the two men bound in the room listened to the steady whisper of the water and fought awhile unavailingly

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at their bonds. Then suddenly the light went out slowly, its last gleam falling on the distorted face of the dead man lying between their feet so that both could see him.

With the darkness it seemed that something evil invaded the room, something almost tangible that moved about them with silent movements, that whispered to them without a voice—something infinitely powerful and infinitely hateful in its wordless suggestions. As the cold sweat of utter fear ran down over Jim's face he felt that this perhaps was the very essence of Mathias, that his experiment was to be an experiment with men's souls. The horror darkened about him and rather than sit still with it he fought again with the ropes until they cut his wrist so that the blood came. Then suddenly the light came on again and he felt that he could have screamed as he saw the dead constable with his vacant dead face sit up, sit up as though alive with queer jerky movements and mouth at him before the light went out again and a new wave of darkness enveloped him from head to foot, a wave that seemed to blot out his very soul.

He heard the note of the water change to a new one, to a sobbing gurgle that ever so slowly grew louder, and it seemed to him that the seat on which they sat was no longer quite steady. From time to time it appeared to rock a little and he felt, as he had once felt in an earthquake, that earth itself was no longer to be relied upon. Jim Harvey was a man of proven courage—he had been in danger

often and faced it squarely, and to Bob Kennedy danger had been a bedfellow for many years. Yet here in the darkness with the unknown horror about them, both men felt that before long their brains would surely give. If only they could speak to each other it would have been better. Kennedy worked at the gag until it seemed as if the muscles of his jaws were knotted in cramps but all he succeeded in doing was to loosen it just sufficiently to make a meaningless noise that to Jim, bound behind him, seemed even worse than the dead silence. The light came on again for an instant and once more they saw the constable—dead beyond a doubt, the face showed that. Yet he moved grotesquely, moved as though alive, drew nearer to them now before the light went out again and the sobbing gurgle of the water rose still higher in pitch as the stone bench below them quivered more distinctly.

"I SUPPOSE it's time we started back, it'll be dark soon," remarked Kit Barrington as he rescued the stick which, for the tenth time in succession, Mica had retrieved from the canal where they had spent a very happy afternoon with the dogs, away from Lahore which had become so gloomy of late.

"I suppose we ought to," answered Jean. Reluctantly she got to her feet and called to Rags who was investigating the bullet-riddled tree trunk into which Jean had been firing intermittently with Kit's pistol for the last hour. Rags connected gun noises with game, with pleasant warm-scented furry creatures into whose still warm fur or feathers a dog might thrust its nose to revel in the delirious scent. This business of making gun noises at pieces of inanimate and scentless wood puzzled him. Mica had long ago realized that this was only make-believe, the atmosphere was not the real thing.

Di called to Rupa who with Bup was sitting by the car under a tree a little way off. The big dog was very reserved, and although not actively hostile to Rags observed a carefully measured distance. With Mica also he was restrained, canine law prevented her biting him in the same way that the English code prevents a man from hitting a woman. Like the Englishwoman Mica traded on the convention and Rag's life was a burden to him. Of

Bup she was sometimes a little scared though she nipped him occasionally to show her superiority of sex.

As they walked over to the car, Rupa, who had come across at Di's voice, following them with the lunch basket, Di reflected on the afternoon they had passed, which would have been altogether perfect if only Jim had been there. She felt very selfish at having gone out with Kit and Jean, but the strain had been telling of late and she felt the absolute necessity for a few hours clear from the oppressive atmosphere of Lahore where she had come into contact with so much that was terrible.

They repacked themselves into the car, Kit and Rupa in front and the girls and the dogs in the capacious back seat, and set out on their long drive back to Lahore. Kit had deliberately taken them out some distance to get right away. As he drove, he wondered what they would find when they returned. One simply did not know what to expect these days. And the same thoughts were in Di's mind as the miles fell behind them in the growing dark and the dusty white road leaped up to meet the powerful headlights.

Then suddenly she felt the car slow down, heard Kit's muttered explanation of impatience, and leaned forward with a question.

"Road's up," said Kit pointing to the obstruction, the smoky red lamp. "Started since we came out this morning. We shall have to take the long way round."

He swung the car as he spoke. There was a double reason for his annoyance because not only was this other road longer and bad surfaced but it led past the white house. As far as he knew the unknown enemy had abandoned the place, nevertheless Kit did not particularly care about driving that way by night. However, there was nothing else for it now. He put down the accelerator and the car swept along the white ribbon of road in the formless dark.

Then his quick eye caught something in the shadows ahead and he slowed again. Only a car, a deserted one, apparently. He wondered a little because that road was little used and led to no particular place of interest such as people might picnic in. Moreover it was early still for picnics such as beguile the hot evenings at the end of spring and there was no moon.

Then he whistled softly to himself and pulled up the Buick. Rolls Royces were not too common in Lahore. He wondered what Mathias could be doing out here. The car was empty and the lights off, which made him wonder the more. Then he noticed something else in the light of the spot lamp which he had switched on. Thrown carelessly over the back of the seat was a raincoat with a peculiar tartan lining that he recognized as belonging to Jim Harvey. Obviously they were both out here.

Then Rupa, who with his quick eyes had also recognized the coat, whispered to him. "All is not well here, sahib. Bup can hear something, he

is all stiff. He scents something though he has not spoken yet. It would be well to look."

Kit switched off the lights, and picking up one of the two pistols he had brought out passed it over to Di, telling the girls to keep a careful lookout. Then very noiselessly he drove the car forward some fifty yards in the dark and stopped to get out. He did not like leaving them alone there, but he was worried and felt that he ought to see if Jim and Mathias were anywhere near by.

Some distance away against the starlit sky he could make out the shadowy shape of the white house and followed by Rupa and Bup he walked cautiously in that direction, his hand ready on his pistol.

"It is not well, sahib," whispered Rupa. "Bup says there is blood somewhere near," and although Barrington did not always believe what Rupa said Bup said, he knew that the dog was excited, tensely excited, for as he laid his hand soothingly on the great head he could feel the nostrils working and the great muscles of the throat and neck quivering tensely.

Suddenly, as they neared the building, a form loomed up out of the shadows and Barrington half drew the pistol. Then he slipped it back as he recognized Mathias—it was clearly Mathias. He called to him and the man checked and then approached him. Mathias never cursed, anyway aloud, after all he had nothing particular to curse by. But to say that he was annoyed at the meeting was putting it very mildly. His arrangements for

Kit Barrington were not due to materialize for some hours yet. His keen brain ran over the situation as he answered Kit's questions.

"Yes, Barrington. Harvey is somewhere here, at least he was some time ago. He and Kennedy and some police were raiding the white house, they had news of the fellows they were after, I saw one of them here myself, and they tried to get into my house. I told Kennedy and drove him here. Then by those microphones Harvey had put in, we overheard the fellows and discovered that they had a passage leading over to the red ruins and had got the alarm. The rest of the police went round that side and Harvey and Kennedy and three men went in this end to follow the passage in case they tried to break back. I waited outside. Having heard nothing for some time I followed with a torch down into the cellars but couldn't find them there. "I don't know if there is a passage there which is hidden. I could find no door. But I'm worried about them and was coming back to get my car and drive round the red ruins over there to get hold of the superintendent and tell him."

Mathias was worried, his quick ears had caught the sound of the second man behind Kit and he knew that there was a dog there, too, he could hear it, hear the noises it made which did not reach Kit's ears. Were there others behind, too?

Then he learnt with relief that it was only Kit and the two girls in the car. That made it simpler though time was short. He ought to be on his

way to tell the police now and there was little time to do the needful. He regretted having told Taru and his assistant to follow the other track. They would not be far, though, and probably Taru would hear him if he called.

He called to Taru in that noiseless speech, called twice. That was his one mistake that night and it would not have been made had he realized that it was Rupa there in the shadows. He assumed it to be one of Kit's orderlies.

Both dog and man heard the call and Rupa's one hand came down in an imperative gesture on the dog as the beast stiffened at the sound. His other hand went to the knife in his belt. Who was this sahib who called to Taru in the old speech? Rupa was interested, keenly interested.

Then both Rupa and Bup heard something more, an answer came back, and as he listened Rupa, whose ears were as those of the animals, caught the sound of footfalls.

Once again Mathias spoke in the silent speech and this time Rupa wondered no longer. There was clearly danger afoot. He slipped his hand from Bup's neck and the big dog leapt forward in answer to his word.

"Put the light on and watch the sahib," called Rupa to Kit. "There is danger."

The circle of light from Kit's torch fell on Mathias and in that half second Barrington wondered if he had suddenly gone mad. He had been talking to Mathias, and yet was the man who had moved away a little at the sound of Rupa's voice, Mathias?

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Kit's mind leaped back into the past as he noted a peculiar turn of the head in the brilliant focus of his spot light. It was all over so quickly that he found it difficult to explain at length afterwards. He said that he had the impression that the Armenian who had tricked him in Iraq was there before him, and then he noted that the man was tapping nervously with his left hand on the wall beside him as from the darkness beyond came a muffled cry and then the sound of a worry and flurry.

Mathias was clearly disturbed; for an instant Kit watched the moving fingers as though hypnotized. Then as Mathias turned he hesitated no longer for there was murder in the clean-shaven face and the suddenly blazing eyes. The uplifted hand held no pistol, but something gleamed between the fingers as the torchlight caught them, something that the next instant would, so it seemed to Kit, fly into his face.

The crack of his pistol was a minute fraction of a second before the fingers loosed their hold. Then the grip was loosed as the bullet tore its way through bone and muscle. A thin veil of vapour seemed to drift across Mathias's face and then he spun forward face downward to the ground.

Kit leaped over him to where beyond he heard Rupa call and found the shikari struggling on the floor with a powerfully built man to whose leg Bup was clinging. Rupa had the man by the throat, which was perhaps as well for him, for beyond the struggling trio another man lay huddled up on

his back and his throat gaped open to the night ; Bup had torn it clean out of him.

They quietened the struggling man, swiftly bound his hands with his own turban, and with difficulty detached Bup.

"It is Taru," said Rupa breathlessly looking at his prisoner. "It was well Bup was here or maybe I had not caught his knife hand in time." He showed the stabbing dagger he had taken from the Saddhu. "But the sahib does not know, of course. Now where is the police sahib and the other?" He turned to the Saddhu who spat at him for answer. Rupa reasoned patiently.

In the darkness a quick flurry announced the arrival of Rags who had hurled himself straight out of the car at the sound of Kit's pistol and came tearing through the darkness. Something told him that this was no mere making of gun noises at inoffensive tree trunks. In the car the two girls were restraining an excited Mica.

Kit meantime had bent over Mathias again. A bullet-shattered hand has killed no man yet and Kennedy wondered, until he noticed the broken spicule of glass and something caught his nostrils and turned him giddy so that he reeled back quickly, breathing out with all his force. He had fired only just in time, for otherwise that gas capsule would have burst in his own face and he would be lying here as dead as Mathias seemed to be.

He had no time to reflect much—he had to act quickly. Jim was certainly here, the coat proved that. Mathias had said Kennedy also was here,

probably that was true. Doubtless Mathias had snared the two of them. Of the intention of the other two men there was no doubt, the pistol and the knife they carried made it clear.

"Can you hold him," he asked Rupa.

"Surely," grinned Rupa. "Also I have Bup if others come. But he must be made to talk; he is either silent or abusive. There are ways, Taru, of loosening even thy tongue. Sahib, give me matches."

Barrington flung him his box and ran back towards the road, where, to his intense relief he found the girls safe although very disturbed after the pistol shot they had heard.

He gave them swift incisive orders. They were to drive straight back as fast as they could to Doctor Maxwell's, not to their own house. Possibly there might be something dangerous there too, if his half formed suspicions were right. They were to get hold of the police, Smith if they could find him, and bring out a party at once. They were to stop nowhere on the road, and Di was to keep the pistol handy while Jean drove.

He would tell them nothing more in answer to their questions and there was no refusing when Kit Barrington gave orders. The Buick disappeared down the road but before her lights were out of sight Kit was back to where Rupa contemplated his captive.

"He will speak very shortly," announced Rupa, and after a quick look Kit Barrington, who felt no compassion with regard to the stony-eyed man on

the ground, agreed that he probably would. There are ways of quelling even hate, and Rupa, whose ancestors had been bandits for probably two thousand years with every man's hand against them until the advent of the Pax Britannica, knew some of those ways.

At the end of another five minutes, Taru between curses had provided certain definite information, to wit, that Jim and Bob were prisoners in the underground rooms; at least that is if they were not already dead.

"God help you if they are," said Kit Barrington, and the Saddhu whose nerve had given quailed at the man's face. "If they are, I think you will not live to be hanged comfortably."

They drove him before them into the building and down the stairs and so into the chamber which had to Bob Kennedy and his policemen seemed the end of the building. This time, however, no trap gaped, the dusty floor was clear, and Kit, thinking he had been tricked, turned swiftly upon the Saddhu.

"It is below," said Taru in the vernacular. "Below that stone." He was anxious now to save the prisoners if might be. Dead, they were useless to him—he would die and he knew it would not be by hanging. If they were rescued alive possibly he might escape, he might turn King's evidence, he could put the blame upon the two dead men outside, he had seen that Mathias was dead. So long as he could reach a law court he thought he stood an excellent chance, for he had friends well

versed in the ways of defeating justice. But against this man and this animal Rupa, there was nothing to be done. All the oriental in Taru's composition came up to swamp the veneer of civilization he had picked up in America—the oriental recognition of direct force and simple straightforward methods not dependant upon the mere twisting of words. Yes, he hoped very much indeed that they might be in time, and despite his torn and lacerated leg he helped with the flag-stone as they prised it up.

At the foot of the stairs they stumbled over a limp body, that of the constable who had waited with Mathias, and whom Mathias had killed before going down after Jim and Bob Kennedy. The police would not have been brought to that passage, another shorter one leading out to the upper ground would have been shown to them, and in two or three days' time they would accidentally have come across the remains of Jim and Bob, translated for the occasion. Hence it had been quite sufficient to roll the last constable's body down the stairs out of the way.

In the room at the far end Jim and Bob waited for death. The sobbing sound of the water became more and more audible and the stone below them quivered more frequently. The light still switched on and off, showing the dead policeman who, however, had now ceased to move. Of one thing only were both men conscious, and that was of the sudden cessation of that wave of inexplicable horror which had engulfed them and

threatened to drive them mad. It had ceased suddenly, ceased as darkness vanishes when a switch is turned. There was now nothing except darkness and death to come, and this seemed a little thing in comparison with what had been there at first.

Then from along the passage they caught a noise and sat still, ceasing for an instant from their renewed efforts to get free. It was the noise of feet and then came a sound altogether other, the call of an English voice ringing oddly down the vaulted passage, their own names echoing along the stone roof. The light which had been on switched off again, it was evidently automatically controlled, but an instant later to replace it came the glow of an electric torch, and with that came Kit Barrington and two dogs. Following him came Rupa and, to Jim and Bob's surprise, the Saddhu whose neck was gripped by one of Rupa's sinewy hands; the other pressed a knife point against Taru's throat. Then the stone below them gave another long quiver and rocked uncertainly.

Kit tore off the gag from Jim's mouth—he was the nearer and as he did so felt the floor move queerly below him.

"The stone's turning under us," gasped Jim as soon as his mouth was free. That fiend there—make him show you the control."

Kit spun round on Taru with a swift question and Taru wilted. There was no way of stopping it now. Once the water ran by that channel it ran until the counterpoise was released. They must

be cut free as quick as possible. There might yet be time but they must hurry.

"If it turns you go too, my friend," grunted Kit as he took the Saddhu and smashed him down with all his force against the stone bench. For the rest of his life the Saddhu's face was wreckage. Then with the stone rocking more and more below them they cut and hacked at the binding ropes while the dogs sensing the excitement barked and sought to assist in this peculiar game.

Rupa to whom the knife was natural was finished first and Kennedy, stiff and cramped, was hauled clear. Then as Kit hacked at the ropes still binding Jim's feet the stone lifted a clear inch, lifted and settled under their weight and then lifted again.

"Get clear, man!" shrieked Jim. "She's going now."

But Kit had no intention of getting clear. He hacked twice savagely at the twisted ropes and then as the stone lifted higher seized Jim and hurled himself backwards and Rupa caught at him as he did so. The stone rose higher and higher swinging about its centre, and the body of the second policeman rolled oddly to the edge and then helplessly lumbered off into the black pit below. Jim felt as if his foot would be torn off, then the last cut strand of rope gave and three men rolled backward in a tumbled heap upon the floor.

They sat up and felt themselves and then saw Kennedy lying on his face at the edge of the pit. Beside him Rags barked impatiently.

The great stone was now swinging gently as it came to rest vertically in the centre of the open pit it had masked.

Kennedy seemed to be struggling violently and he turned a sweat-grimed face over his shoulder.

"For God's sake lend a hand here," he called hoarsely and the others went to his assistance wondering what he was doing.

"My friend the Saddhu," said Bob, as they bent over him where he lay clinging desperately with wiry arms to the Saddhu's unconscious form. Between them they pulled the limp body up into safety and Kennedy sat up and stretched his cramped and aching limbs.

"I wouldn't have liked him to go down," he explained. "I want a lot out of him yet," he panted.

Then he looked at Kit. "What happened and how did you come here?" he asked. "They caught us good and proper. Have you seen Mathias. He's the Master!"

"He *was* the Master," corrected Kit. "I met him outside quite by accident and he very nearly got away with it—would have, except for Rupa here who spotted something. I still don't quite understand. I think he was going to gas me when I fired."

He sketched hurriedly the story of that adventure.

"And the girls have gone off by themselves," said Jim getting to his feet. "We ought to hop after them quick." And then for the first time he realized that he was very limp and barely capable

of walking—that strain of those dark minutes and the horror had told upon him.

“I don’t think anything will happen yet,” said Kennedy. “Mathias had arranged for something against the Renton’s bungalow to-night but it would have been fixed for later. If luck holds we might catch the people. The thing now is to find Ahmad Khan and his men. From what Taru said I fancy they’ll be off on a wild-goose chase after what they think is this lot.” He turned to see the Saddhu sitting up unsteadily and feeling his ruined face and he interrogated him pitilessly.

The man quailed before him and answered cringingly, all his original cool insolence clean gone.

“I thought so,” remarked Kennedy. “Ahmad Khan will be a long time. They had three men waiting, got up just like themselves, with orders to appear near the red house and then do a bolt and draw the police. They’ve been so very thorough I’ll bet Ahmad Khan is taken in. Let’s get out of this place into the open air.”

And in that last sentence Kit Barrington got his first inkling of what he learned more fully, later that night—the horror of that time of waiting.

In the cooler, cleaner night outside, by the light of the torch they examined the body of Mathias the Master, pulling it carefully clear into a wind-swept place lest any of the chemicals that had been in the capsule still lingered on the clothes.

Kennedy looked down on the dead face and pondered. It was of course Mathias, but now it

seemed different. It was not the Master, it was no one whom he knew, just an ordinary elderly clean-shaven man with nothing distinctive of feature or form. He understood how easy disguise had been, and thought of what the Master had said about change of personality. Then for a little he stayed silent wondering who this being could have been, across whose path chance had flung him and whom, indeed, he had only caught by chance and from whom merest chance had let him and Jim escape. Then he wondered. Was it chance or was it something else? A question he had often asked himself in reflecting over the tight places in which he had been. It must be something more than chance.

He loosened the shoe on the right foot and pulled off the sock. That puzzled him considerably because all the toes were there. He knew the Saddhu had all his toes. Then a thought struck him and he turned to where that other body lay, that of the man whom Bup had killed. It was the man who had been with the Saddhu when first they had found themselves bound in the underground room. And this time there was no doubt—the little toe was missing. The face was unfamiliar to him, evidently the man had been kept in the background, hidden possibly in the passage under the white house except at night.

The gleam of headlights caught his eye and he turned to where Jim and Kit were sitting talking quietly.

"I fancy they've come," said he.

That they had come there was no doubt. Rags knew it and departed barking joyously into the dark towards the lights, and presently with flicker of electric torches and sound of voices, an inwardly terrified Di, fearing each minute what they should find for she had learnt that Jim had gone out with Mathias and Kennedy, appeared with Smith and a dozen policemen.

Then in the light of her torch she saw Jim and for the next few minutes had eyes and ears for no one else.

Kennedy, now his normal self again, took charge, and sent a party to the red ruins to look for Ahmad Khan whom they found considerably later. He had two prisoners whom he contemplated with extreme disfavour for they had given him plenty of trouble to catch after a long chase and he was by no means certain that they were the men he wanted. He had known the Saddhu in old days and he realized that the Saddhu was not either of them. One of them might be the Master whom he had never seen, but despite Ahmad Khan's persuasive questions the man maintained his rôle of a common thief.

He came with speed to the white house expecting Kennedy's wrath—the constable from Kennedy had given him a somewhat garbled account of what had happened—there were several corpses it seemed. Following the man down into the cellars he came at last upon Kennedy supervising the recovery of the dead constables' bodies from the pit in which his own had nearly lain. For his own sanity Bob

was particularly anxious to find out what had made a dead man move.

He settled that to his satisfaction presently when he examined certain pieces of twisted wire. It is possible if you are a good enough anatomist to galvanize dead things into the semblance of life. There seemed to be no limits to the Master's accomplishments.

Kennedy sighed a little at the acquaintanceship which had been so brief. He would like to have found out more and now his enemy was dead. Then he remembered that the Saddhu was still alive and became more cheerful as, leaving Ahmad Khan in charge, he walked back with Smith to the waiting car. With luck there would be more work to-night. In all probability Mathias had staged the attack on Renton's house before he left.

It was a month later that Bob Kennedy, pulling on his full-dress police uniform, reflected a little over all that had passed. The occasion was Kit Barrington's wedding with Jean Harvey. In another month he would be putting on that full-dress again for Di Renton's wedding, but he realized that he could bear it better now than he once had thought.

In a way Di had gone but she and Jim were his friends and that was much. And as though to make up in some fashion, fate which had robbed him with one hand had offered some compensation with the other. There was great work ahead, two or three years of it at least, before he would have finished following up the strings which had come into his hand on that memorable night.

The attempt upon Renton's bungalow had been duly made, a well staged-attempt. Bob's policemen had been drafted in singly and by back ways in various disguises. They had taken four very much wanted and desperate characters which gave a link between the Master's mysterious organization of the Speakers in Silence and certain others whom Bob knew well.

The search through Mathias's effects had produced most valuable evidence, not merely Indian but

linked with half the countries in the world. Bob Kennedy saw himself on special duty wandering round the world for some time now, and that would bring forgetfulness of what might have been.

Yes, it was a good world he decided, a world in which a man with work to do would not find life savourless at all. He girded on the sword which Faiz Ullah handed him and for the first time for several weeks hummed an air. Faiz Ullah rejoiced at the unaccustomed music. Evidently the sahib was recovering and would presently find another "mem" to console him, for undoubtedly it was time he took unto himself a wife lest his breed die out in the land.

The wedding was the usual brilliant affair of uniforms, which brides and illustrated papers seem to like. Kit looked upon it all as the most unmitigated nuisance. The only thing he wanted was Jean but since she and Di demanded all this fuss it had to be gone through with.

He hated making speeches and that was duly demanded of him, so he stumbled through the tongue-tied effort which is the distinguishing mark of the Englishman compelled to open his mouth upon an occasion of ceremony. He was glad when the worst of it was over and he was able to change into mufti, still more grateful when he drove the Buick out of the Rentons' bungalow amid a shower of rice and confetti and took the road which would presently bring him and Jean to Kashmir. On the back seat of the car Mica

and Rags sat on opposite sides and made excited noises at all the dogs they passed. They sensed it as an occasion—there had been many foolish people gathered together and much talk and master had been abstracted. But all was well now, they were on the open road and there were pleasantly oily smelling gun cases piled up between them, and for days orderlies had been pitching tents and overhauling camp furniture. Rags smelt the coming prospect of free camp life where dogs may eat bones under beds or even on them without being reproved.

Kit had thoughts of camp life too, but this time it was going to be an altogether new camp life because Jean was going to be there. Jean and he were going to explore all the places he knew so well, he was going to show her all his mountains and valleys; after the wearing time they had been through together there was a fairyland to come.

Neither said much as they drove through Lahore, which was hot and dusty now, but that mattered little since by to-morrow they would be up in the cool of the pine clad-hills in sight of the snows. Jean's mind was very full of many things both past and to come. But suddenly she was aware of Rags, who had abandoned his pastime of shouting abuse at all low dogs who did not drive in cars, and leaned his scarred head over the back of the seat to make love to the woman in front.

"They all love you, little Jean," said Kit, and his voice was a caress.

And Jean answered as she had answered once before, as she pressed his muscular arm to the detriment of his steering.

"Isn't it fun, Kit—isn't it fun!" But she didn't explain what was fun. Presumably it included everything, life and love, Rags and Mica, and Christopher Robin as she called him in her heart of hearts. And so, as newly married couples should, they drove out of the world that knew them, up the road to Fairyland, and once again Rags, as he presently settled to sleep, no more dogs being visible to abuse, caught the faint murmur:

"Isn't it fun, Kit! Isn't it fun."

THE END



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